
Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and the United States

[The following are excerpts from a media note released by Office of the Spokesman, Washington, DC, September 25, 2008.]

The Foreign Ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and the United States met today in New York to consult on issues of mutual concern and to coordinate their efforts to promote regional peace and security.

Motivated by their shared vision of regional security, stability, peace, and prosperity, the parties to this statement (the GCC states, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and the United States) reaffirmed their commitment to work together and to intensify their consultations as partners and friends and to seek the settlement of disputes through peaceful means.

Recalling previous meetings, including most recently the July 21, 2008 meeting in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E. [United Arab Emirates], and the April 21, 2008 meeting in Manama, Bahrain, the Ministers affirmed the value of these meetings and pledged to continue meeting regularly to exchange views and consider common approaches to key issues that affect this shared vision.

The Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the peaceful resolution of regional conflicts in a manner consistent with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. In line with the participants' previous declarations, including the Manama Declaration of April 21, 2008, the Ministers underlined the importance of mutual respect for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of all states. The Ministers condemned all acts of terrorism in all its forms, extremism, sectarian violence, and sectarian agendas.

The participants reiterated their steadfast support to the states represented in the face of any threats to their sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. Agreeing that the peace and security of the region are critical to international peace and security, to the health of the global economy, and represent vital national interests for all, the participants resolved to continue their longstanding cooperation against such challenges and threats.

The Ministers expressed their hope that the commitments made at Annapolis will come to fruition in order to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and to establish an independent, viable, and democratic Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel, according to all relevant Security Council Resolutions. The Ministers pressed for the successful outcome of the ongoing negotiations and reiterated their support for the Arab peace initiative as an effective means to tackle the Arab-Israeli conflict and pave the way for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The Ministers expressed their concern about the continuing building of settlements in the occupied territories and the negative impact this has on the peace negotiations. They urged Israel to establish a moratorium on settlement activities and to dismantle settlement outposts.

Regarding Lebanon, the Ministers reaffirmed their support for Lebanon's sovereignty and security and welcomed the continuation of the political process that has followed the Arab League-sponsored Doha Agreement. The Ministers welcomed the election of President Michel Sleiman and look forward to the national dialogue and discussion of the national defense strategy. The Ministers welcomed the recent talks between Syria and Lebanon and voiced their support for the commitments to normalize relations between the two countries as soon as possible.

With respect to the Iranian nuclear issue, the Ministers affirmed the need to continue close consultations. The Ministers called on Iran to honor its promise of cooperating with the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency], its commitment to develop peaceful nuclear power, and its assurance that it is not seeking production of nuclear weapons. In this regard, the Ministers urged Iran to cooperate fully with UN [United Nations] Security Council Resolutions mandating Iran to suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities. Noting the International Atomic Energy Agency's reports, the Ministers urged Iran to cooperate fully with the IAEA's ongoing investigation of this matter. The Ministers voiced their strong support for the right of all parties to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes as provided for in Article IV of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The Ministers reiterated their support for the full exercise of navigational rights in the Strait of Hormuz, an international waterway vital to global commerce, in accordance with international law and the Law of the Sea.

The Ministers reaffirmed their support for the national unity, independence, and territorial integrity of Iraq and the important role a sovereign, stable, and prosperous Iraq plays in the wider region. They recognized the need to support Iraq's constitutional political process and national reconciliation, while underlining the importance of the rule of law, institution building, and the holding of regularly scheduled elections. Pointing to the inclusion of Iraq at this and previous meetings, the Ministers called on the international community to take additional steps to help re-integrate Iraq more fully into the international community. The Ministers welcomed recent progress at strengthening bilateral relations.

The Ministers reaffirmed the obligations of all states, in accordance with international law; relevant agreements; UN Security Council Resolutions 1546 (2004), 1618 (2005), 1267 (1999), and 1373 (2001); and other relevant Security Council Resolutions, to combat terrorist activities and to prevent the use by terrorists of their territory for supplying, organizing, and launching terrorist operations in Iraq. The Ministers expressed support for Iraqi efforts to prevent the transit of terrorists and illegal arms and emphasized the responsibility of Iraq and its neighbors to control their common borders against all forms of illicit trafficking.

The Ministers emphasized the importance of the continuity of their meetings under this configuration of states, composed of the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and the United States, as a diplomatic vehicle to promote regional security, consultations, and coordination. The Ministers called for regular meetings of this group to be held every six months, hosted on a rotating basis by each of the group's members. The Ministers welcome the possibility of a meeting to be held in Baghdad in early 2009.