



### **H.E. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs State of Kuwait <sup>1</sup>**

**Gulf Affairs: How is the State of Kuwait using its diplomatic power in regional and global security?**

**Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah:** Kuwait is proud of its strategically steadfast diplomacy and balanced foreign policy that is based on fostering ties with regional and global partners. Kuwait takes an active role in regional and international cooperation on issues of common concern, participating in international forums and agreements that aim to enhance global peace and security, sustainable development and the protection of human rights.

Based on a firm belief that achieving stability, peace, security and justice among nations of the world cannot be reached without fulfilling the basic needs of living, Kuwait took it upon itself since its independence in 1961 to help countries in need. Kuwait has carried out this policy by focusing much of its attention on international cooperation and initiatives that assist developing and least developed countries. This desire has been reflected by the establishment of the Kuwait Fund, which for over 55 years has helped more than 105 developing countries around the world to combat poverty by supporting developmental projects. It has contributed 897 loans, valued at \$18.679 billion.

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<sup>1</sup> The interview was translated from Arabic

Kuwait pursues a humanitarian approach in its foreign policy, which continuously makes it among the first to aid nations suffering from poverty and conflict. For example, it hosted three international donor conferences to support the people of Syria in 2013, 2014 and 2015. Through these conferences, we were able to raise more than \$7.6 billion in order to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, who are devastated by the consequences of war. These three conferences were the largest international forums held in response to any disaster in modern history. Kuwait alone contributed \$1.3 billion, which was donated to United Nations agencies that work with refugees and displaced people.

Kuwait has also donated to the hosting nations, who opened their doors to the Syrian people fleeing the destruction of war, and whose generosity in hosting large numbers of refugees has certainly strained their resources. Kuwait donated \$500 million to each of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, to help with hosting refugees.

Perhaps the United Nations' invitation for Kuwait to host three international donor conferences is in itself proof of how the international community holds Kuwait in high regard, respecting its neutral and balanced foreign policy which is founded on a deep-rooted belief in making available its capabilities for the purpose of alleviating human suffering for all peoples through contributions to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

Additionally, Kuwait has hosted several summits in the past three years, including the Third Africa-Arab Summit, the 25<sup>th</sup> Arab League Summit, the 34<sup>th</sup> Gulf Cooperation Council Summit, the first Asia Cooperation Dialogue Summit, and the 42<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Council of Foreign Ministers. These are added to a long list of successes achieved through Kuwait's foreign policy, especially when keeping in mind the current situation and challenges of the region.

Kuwait is also one of the largest humanitarian aid donors and was ranked first in 2014, as its humanitarian assistance amounted to 0.24% percent of the country's gross national income—the highest among all donor countries that year—according to the “Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2015,” a report issued by Development Initiatives.

All these generous contributions led to the recognition of His Highness the Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a Humanitarian Leader, and Kuwait as a center for humanitarian work by the UN Secretary General. This recognition is a translation of a humanitarian philosophy founded by His Highness, based on the principle of prioritizing moderation in an effort to contain disputes and crises before they expand and leave a disastrous impact on civil society in the region and around the world. These principles and values are derived from the emphasis of philanthropy displayed by the leadership of the country throughout its history and have become a cornerstone of Kuwait's policy, which focuses on helping those in need and giving support to nations that suffer from war and displacement, regardless of their religious, racial, geographical and political affiliations.

**Gulf Affairs: What are the security challenges facing Kuwait? How does Kuwait's foreign policy handle these challenges?**

**Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled:** We are watching with grave concern the growing phenomenon of terrorism

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and the risks it carries for all nations across the globe, as it is no longer restricted to one region. Terrorism has become the most prominent security challenge that we face as separate states and as a region, and it requires that we mobilize all our efforts as an international community to defeat it in all its forms and manifestations, in addition to curtailing its financing.

Therefore, Kuwait has ratified all international counter-terrorism resolutions and pacts. We also call on other nations to abide by these pacts, most notably UN Security Council resolutions 2170 and 2178, in addition to spreading the values of tolerance, coexistence, mutual respect, and to rejecting extremism, hatred, and violence in all their forms.

Kuwait takes this issue seriously and is an active participant in the global anti-Daesh coalition, reiterating its stance in supporting international efforts toward this end.

**Gulf Affairs: Kuwait was targeted by an Islamic State-affiliated group on 26 June 2015 . A suicide bomber attacked a Shia mosque in Kuwait City, killing 26 people. This was the worst security breach for Kuwait since the Gulf War. What effect did this attack have on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' agenda?**

**Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled:** Kuwait was struck, as were other countries around the world, with a major terrorist operation. This attack was especially devastating as it took place during the holy month of Ramadan and during Friday prayer. HH the Emir immediately visited the site of the bombing and united Kuwaitis behind him. This is proof of our firm belief in national unity and our unwillingness to compromise this united, solid and deep-rooted faith in our national cohesiveness.

**Gulf Affairs: The United States has reached an agreement with Iran on its nuclear program. How does Kuwait view this agreement?**

**Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled:** What has been agreed upon between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the P5+1 group is good news, not only for Kuwait but also for the international community as a whole. This is because it is in everyone's interest that the Iranian nuclear issue no longer remains one of the sources of tension facing the region.

**Gulf Affairs: How would you describe Kuwaiti-Iraqi relations since the fall of the Baathist regime? What are the obstacles that stand in the way of full cooperation between the two nations?**

**Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled:** Both Kuwait and Iraq have a sincere desire to start a new page and strengthen bilateral relations to fulfil the aspirations of the two nations' peoples. We were able to achieve significant progress in many areas of cooperation.

In December 2015, Kuwait hosted the fifth round of the Kuwaiti-Iraqi Joint Supreme Ministerial Committee which was an opportunity to enhance bilateral relations, and where several memorandums of understanding and agreements were signed. This, in addition to bilateral high-level visits, is proof of our joint hope of reaching the level aspired to, which is also reflected in the volume of the committee's work and the diversity of its terms of reference and its distinguished results.

Kuwait is also supportive of the reform measures carried out by Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi. We strongly encourage and emphasize the importance of inclusive dialogue between all parties and factions, without exclusion. We also stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Iraqi government in its efforts to combat Daesh and other terrorist activities.

**Gulf Affairs: In your opinion, what role will the Gulf Cooperation Council have to ensure the security of the region? What are the priorities that you wish to be discussed by the Gulf Cooperation Council in terms of security?**

**Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled:** The Gulf Cooperation Council states are surrounded by exceptional and complicated circumstances, which require that we unite and double our efforts to stop the unrest plaguing the region.

We in Kuwait are very keen on utilizing cooperation in the region, particularly in the area of security cooperation. This was affirmed in the recent 36th GCC Summit held in Riyadh on December 2015. Leaders of the GCC states have all agreed on the importance of fortifying joint military action, as well as activating a unified military command in addition to a comprehensive security strategy between member states. The council also agreed on establishing a police headquarters in Abu Dhabi.

The leaders of the GCC states also emphasized their utter rejection of terrorism and extremism in all their forms and the importance of firmly dealing with this perilous phenomenon.

All of these decisions are certainly of great benefit to all GCC states, including Kuwait. We are certainly keen on preserving Gulf unity in order to follow up the implementation of these decisions and the advancement of GCC security cooperation.