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## EU-GCC Talks Aim to Advance Mutual Interests, Address Global Challenges



**By Tareq Yousef AlShumaimry**  
*Former Secretary-General of the  
Commercial Arbitration Centre of the Gulf  
Cooperation Council*

**C**onfluence of challenges from ongoing conflicts, geopolitical schisms, economic upheavals, and unsustainable development, as well as devastating climate change repercussions and en masse human displacement, have made global cooperation, coordination, and multilateralism no longer an option, but an imperative need of our time.

The need to collectively confront and respond to common security and economic challenges was the genesis for the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981. In signing the GCC Charter, the then leaders of the six-nation

among its growing number of member states. For its part, the GCC bloc has over its 44 years of existence been pursuing similar objectives aimed at furthering their integration into a single secure, political, social, and economic entity.

In 1989, the GCC and the European Economic Community (EEC)—the immediate predecessor of the EU—inked a cooperation agreement, which has evolved over time to include regular ministerial meetings and political dialogues between the two sides on various issues, including common global challenges, economic cooperation, sustainable development, climate change, security, and initiative on the people-to-people level.

To further advance their cooperation, in May 2022, the EU outlined an organizational roadmap to develop a strategic partnership with the GCC. As part of this roadmap, and in response to the growing urgency for a multilateral approach to address global peace, security, economic prosperity, and social development, leaders of member states of the EU and GCC met in Brussels, Belgium for the first EU-GCC Summit in October

multilateral, regional, and bilateral frameworks with a view to further strengthen cooperation. The statement also called for holding a summit every two years, and agreed to hold the next Summit in Saudi Arabia in 2026, and to organize the 29th Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting in Kuwait in 2025.

A year since then, and in line with the Brussels summit communique, Kuwait, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the GCC, is set to host the 29th EU-GCC Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting on Monday, 6 October in Kuwait City. Ahead of the meeting, the GCC Secretariat and the Gulf Regional

office of the EU have been coordinating efforts, reviewing outcomes of the earlier summit, and drawing up plans to address shared strategic challenges.

The EU and the GCC are by many counts totally disparate blocs. With more than 448 million people spread over an area of four million square kilometers (sq km), and an economy that is among the largest in the world at US\$17 trillion, the EU easily dwarfs the 61 million inhabitants of the GCC states that live in an area of less than 2.6 million sq km and have a combined economy of around \$2 trillion.

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GCC bloc affirmed the need for unity, coordination and integration among member states in all fields. based on their common objectives and similar political and cultural identities

It was likewise security and economic compulsions in the aftermath of the Second World War that led to the evolution of the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for intergovernmental security in 1949, and the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. The 1992 Maastricht Treaty, which formed the basis for the European Union (EU) in its present format, was also fueled by the need for cohesion and stability in Europe after the breakup of the former Soviet Union.

While predecessors to the EU pursued different objectives, the EU in its prevailing form was the first to seek social, political and economic integration and harmony

2024, under the theme of 'Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity'.

In a joint statement issued at the end of the summit, EU and GCC leaders stressed the desire of the two blocs to build their Strategic Partnership, based on mutual respect and trust, for the benefit of people in the two regions and beyond. The statement noted that the partnership is anchored on the international rules-based order that fully respects international law, including the United Nations (UN) Charter, international humanitarian law, and the promotion and protection of universal human rights.

The two sides agreed to work together to promote global and regional security and prosperity, including preventing the emergence and escalation of conflicts, and resolving crises. Additionally, they acknowledged the need to foster



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# Lesotho, Kuwait relations built on unwavering friendship, mutual trust

*Independence for Lesotho was not merely the attainment of statehood; it was the fulfillment of our ancestors' dream for dignity, freedom, and peace.*

By Reaven D'Souza  
Executive Managing Editor

Celebrating 59 years of independence and 29 years of strong bilateral relations with Kuwait, the Kingdom of Lesotho stands at a moment of reflection and pride. This dual milestone, symbolic of national pride and enduring solidarity, underscores the deep-rooted friendship and cooperation between the two nations.

In an exclusive interview with The Times Kuwait, Ambassador of Lesotho H.E. Manthabiseng Arcylia Phohleli, pointed out that it was on 4 October 1966, that Lesotho reclaimed its sovereignty after decades of British colonial rule.

"Our country became a British protectorate in March 1868, after our founder King Moshoeshoe I appealed to Britain for protection against encroaching Boers. The Basotho nation, built on the vision and wisdom of King Moshoeshoe I, stood firm in its pursuit of unity, peace, and self-determination.

"Our history is one of resilience—a small nation that preserved its identity through diplomacy and the unyielding spirit of its people. Independence for Lesotho was not merely the attainment of statehood; it was the fulfillment of our ancestors' dream for dignity, freedom, and peace."

She went on to add, "Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the Kingdom of Lesotho and the State of Kuwait have fostered a partnership rooted in mutual respect and cooperation. The State of Kuwait has stood with Lesotho in advancing development, particularly through support in education, health, and infrastructure. This friendship demonstrates the strength of South-South collaboration and the ability of nations, regardless of size, to build meaningful impact together."

Reaffirming her country's commitment to dialogue, peace, and expanding collaboration across key sectors, the ambassador said that economic, investment, and trade opportunities will continue to shape the future of relations between Lesotho and Kuwait.

"As Lesotho looks forward, the country reaffirms its commitment to deepening engagement with Kuwait and the wider Gulf region, guided by several key priorities," said Ambassador Phohleli.

**These include:**

**Investment:** Lesotho continues to enhance its investment climate, offering opportunities in renewable energy, agriculture, manufacturing, and infrastructure. We welcome Kuwaiti private sector partners to explore projects that support sustainable growth.

**Development Assistance and Infrastructure:** Kuwait has consistently extended support to Africa through development aid, particularly in infrastructure, education, and healthcare. Lesotho stands to benefit from such assistance, which aligns closely with our

national development priorities and contributes to long-term resilience.

**Sectors Benefiting Most from Kuwaiti Investment:**

Lesotho offers fertile ground for investment in agriculture, especially horticulture and livestock; in mining, particularly diamonds and untapped mineral resources; and in tourism, where our mountains and cultural heritage provide unique appeal. Renewable energy and water infrastructure are also strategic areas that would gain considerably from Kuwaiti expertise and investment.

**Trade:** With our membership in the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Lesotho provides access to wider regional markets. Strengthening trade ties with Kuwait will unlock opportunities for the exchange of goods, services, and knowledge.

**Tourism:** Known as the 'Kingdom in the Sky,' Lesotho is blessed with majestic mountain landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and eco-tourism potential. We invite the people of Kuwait to discover the beauty, traditions, and hospitality of the Basotho nation.

**Labor Migration:** Labor mobility remains an important pillar of our development. Lesotho seeks structured frameworks that guarantee the dignity, rights, and skills development of Basotho workers abroad while contributing positively to host nations such as Kuwait.

**Engagement with the Gulf Region:** Kuwait serves as an important gateway for Lesotho into the broader Gulf region. From here, we seek to build partnerships with regional organizations, business communities, and development institutions, thereby strengthening Lesotho's footprint across the Middle East.

**Role of Small Nations in Global Diplomacy:**

Small nations such as Lesotho play a pivotal role in global diplomacy by championing equity, justice, and sustainable development. Within the United Nations and other international fora, we contribute the perspectives of developing nations, advocate for multilateralism, and build alliances on pressing global challenges, including climate change and food security.

**Africa-Middle East Collaboration:** The partnership between Africa and the Middle



East is crucial in addressing shared global challenges. By investing in joint research, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and climate resilience, our regions can pool resources and expertise to strengthen food security and confront climate change. Such collaboration exemplifies the spirit of South-South cooperation and enhances our collective voice on the world stage.

She concluded by adding, "As we celebrate the milestones in our relations, Lesotho remains committed to peace, dialogue, and partnership. On behalf of my country, I extend heartfelt gratitude to the Government and People of Kuwait for their unwavering friendship. Together, let us continue to work hand in hand—building bridges of cooperation, advancing shared prosperity, and contributing to global peace and stability."



"Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the Kingdom of Lesotho and the State of Kuwait have fostered a partnership rooted in mutual respect and cooperation. The State of Kuwait has stood with Lesotho in advancing development, particularly through support in education, health, and infrastructure. This friendship demonstrates the strength of South-South collaboration and the ability of nations, regardless of size, to build meaningful impact together."

## Combating human trafficking a key priority for PAM

Combating human trafficking and residency-related exploitation remains a top priority for Kuwait, and strict legal measures are being enforced against anyone found involved in illegal practices, said Public Authority of Manpower (PAM), Acting Director-General of PAM Eng. Rabab Al-Osaimi.

Emphasizing that "there will be no tolerance for this phenomenon, which harms the country's reputation and the rights of workers residing on its territory," Al-Osaimi pointed to the recent upgrade of Kuwait from Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 2 in the US State Department's 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report.

Al-Osaimi added that Kuwait's progress

in combating human trafficking reflects the dedicated efforts of all relevant government agencies, and is the result of coordinated legislative and executive efforts. These include recent qualitative measures aimed at enhancing the protection of workers' rights, standardizing inspection procedures, streamlining complaint handling, and strengthening awareness and training programs for labor inspectors to ensure effective law enforcement.

Looking ahead, she said the next phase will involve tightening regulatory measures, including doubling field inspection campaigns to detect violations related to workers'

rights or contractual terms. More precise mechanisms will also be implemented to document employment contracts and monitor



employers' commitments, closing loopholes that could be exploited by unscrupulous individuals.

Concluding her remarks, Al-Osaimi acknowledged the Ministry of Interior, led by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, for its central role in achieving the milestone upgrade to Tier 2 status. She noted that the Tier 2 ranking demonstrates the country's commitment to enhancing labor protections, combating trafficking, and strengthening oversight mechanisms, while signaling its readiness to further advance worker rights and regulatory compliance in the coming years.

# Women bring a humane dimension to diplomatic work

*Successful diplomats combine flexibility with decisiveness, integrity with sound judgement, and are able to communicate and build relationships even in multicultural environments*

## The Times Kuwait Report

Diplomacy is built on the meeting of cultures and the balancing of national interests, carried out by individuals who represent their countries with commitment and integrity. A shining example of this dedication to effective diplomacy is Deputy Head of the Egyptian Mission in Kuwait, Noura Abdul Hadi, who continues to advance in her diplomatic career with steady confidence, guided by

her interest in global understanding and the principles of dialogue and openness.

From a young age, Hadi was drawn to exploring civilizations and promoting cultural exchange, a path that naturally led her to diplomacy, which she describes as "a profession that unites reason with emotion, and intellect with empathy."

Despite her successive successes, her path in diplomacy has not been free of challenges, particularly when it comes to stereotyping attitudes in some societies on the role of women. She points out that "male bias is still present in certain environments, which requires women to exert extra effort to prove their competence. However, I have always believed in the power of perseverance and in building professional relationships based on mutual respect, and the results have been encouraging and rewarding."

She believes women add a vital humane dimension to diplomatic work through their intrinsic compassion and empathy for others, their ability to listen effectively, build trust, and adopt a collaborative approach suited to contemporary challenges. Hadi adds that both men and women have unique qualities, but women today are demonstrating that they are an indispensable part of modern diplomacy.

Commenting on a significant milestone in her professional career, Hadi recalls a humanitarian moment that left a lasting impact. She participated in facilitating an

urgent relief initiative in a neighboring country, which provided thousands of families with support. She explains that seeing the direct impact of those efforts on people's lives is what gives this work its true meaning.

Hadi believes that a successful leader in this field must combine flexibility with decisiveness, integrity with sound judgment, and the ability to communicate and build relationships in multicultural environments, even under the most complex circumstances.

Regarding the importance of diplomacy to reflect the diversity of society, she emphasizes the need to empower women and disadvantaged groups to join the diplomatic corps, and ensure that the foreign policy of their nation represents the entirety of people, not just the elite.

In a message to aspiring young women, Hadi advises anyone seeking to enter the diplomatic field to cultivate a passion for international affairs, maintain a constant willingness to learn, and never hesitate to express their opinion. She concludes, "Change begins with youth, and strong representation begins from within."

Reflecting on her time in Kuwait, Hadi described it as one of the most enriching periods of her career, saying, "It was a remarkable experience on both the professional and personal levels. Kuwait is a traditionally hospitable country, and interactions with my Kuwaiti colleagues



was constructive and rewarding. I always felt valued and supported by all parties. This experience will remain a shining milestone in my diplomatic journey."

In a message to aspiring young women, Hadi advises anyone seeking to enter the diplomatic field to cultivate a passion for international affairs, maintain a constant willingness to learn, and never hesitate to express their opinion. She concludes, "Change begins with youth, and strong representation begins from within."



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# Uzbek-Kuwait relations mark a new phase with presidential visit

## The Times Kuwait Report

**E**mbassy of Uzbekistan celebrated the country's 34th National Day, showcasing the country's independence and rich cultural heritage, while also highlighting the strong and growing ties between Uzbekistan and Kuwait.

The event was attended by the Minister of Electricity, Water, and Renewable Energy, Acting Minister of Finance, and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Subaih bin Abdulaziz Al-Mukhaizeem, as the chief guest, along with officials, diplomats, and distinguished guests.

In his address on the occasion, Ambassador of Uzbekistan H.E. Ayub Khan Yunusov, affirmed his country's great appreciation for the wise policies pursued by Kuwait under the

leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, and Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya, noting that these policies have contributed to strengthening development and international cooperation.

Yunusov said that Uzbek-Kuwaiti relations have witnessed remarkable activity over the past two years. Repeated meetings between the foreign ministers of both countries on the sidelines of international forums, he said, have culminated in the official visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Kuwait in February. The Ambassador described that visit as "the beginning of a new era in the course of bilateral relations."

He explained that the visit resulted in the

signing of agreements and memoranda of understanding covering trade, investment, energy, infrastructure, transport, tourism, and healthcare. These understandings, he said, elevated economic and commercial cooperation to a new level.

The ambassador pointed out that recent practical steps have further reinforced this direction, including the introduction of a visa waiver system for Kuwaiti citizens wishing to visit Uzbekistan for up to 30 days, effective from last June, as well as the launch of direct flights by Jazeera Airways starting this September. These developments, he stressed, open greater opportunities for tourism, cultural, and investment exchanges.

He also noted that the convening of the first meeting of the Joint Governmental Committee between the two countries in November 2024

played a vital role in boosting exchanges between business communities and achieving tangible progress in economic and investment cooperation.

Ambassador Yunusov revealed that around 300 Uzbek citizens are currently working in Kuwait in various fields, including doctors, surgeons, professors, and sports trainers, expressing hope that this number will increase in the coming years. He concluded by affirming that Uzbekistan looks forward to a brighter future in its relations with Kuwait, praising the deep bonds of respect and mutual trust that unite the two friendly peoples.

The festive function organized by the Uzbek embassy highlighted Uzbek's traditions, music, cuisine, and the country's achievements since gaining independence, which were highly appreciated by the attendees.



## Kuwait boosts its position as regional financial hub

**T**he entry or imminent entry of several leading American financial institutions into Kuwait market signals growing international confidence in Kuwait's economy, and strengthens Kuwait's bid to become a regional trade and finance hub.

A major shift in Kuwait's financial landscape came with the establishment of an office in September by BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager. This was followed by reports that other financial and investment firms from the United States, including Goldman Sachs, The Carlyle Group, Franklin Templeton, and State Street, are planning to follow BlackRock's lead and open offices in Kuwait.

The presence of large international financial firms in Kuwait is expected to deepen their ties with Kuwait's \$1 trillion sovereign wealth fund, expand asset management and private investment services, and support broader economic reforms. The new developments come on the heels of Kuwait's recent successful \$11.25 billion sovereign bond issuance, managed partly by Goldman Sachs.

According to the International Monetary Fund, the entry of these firms could help push Kuwait's GDP growth to 2.6 percent in 2025, up from earlier forecasts of 1.9 percent.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported that Kuwait attracted \$614 million in foreign direct investment in 2024, while outward flows reached \$10.3 billion.

The banking sector also showed strong momentum, with total assets rising 10.39% in the first half of 2025 to 120.48 billion dinars, compared to 109.14 billion dinars in the same period of 2024. Net profits increased by 3.63% to 825.1 million dinars.

Analysts note that this influx of international players could enhance Kuwait's competitiveness, attract more foreign capital, and raise confidence among global credit rating agencies, which currently assign Kuwait strong ratings of AA- (Fitch), A+ (S&P), and A1 (Moody's).

Beyond finance, the expansion is set to generate quality job opportunities in fields such as risk management, compliance, fintech, and financial analysis. These roles are expected to strengthen local talent and support Kuwait's Vision 2035 goals of economic diversification.

Despite the positive outlook, challenges remain, including oil price volatility and geopolitical risks. The 2025-2026 budget assumes an average oil price of around \$68 per barrel, with a projected fiscal deficit of 7-8 percent of GDP. Inflation is expected to range between 2.2% and 2.5%.

Even so, observers say Kuwait is entering a new financial era, with international partnerships and reforms positioning it to compete with Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Riyadh as a regional hub.

## ALSAYER & Toyota showcase mega pavilion at Auto World Show 2025



**M**ohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Est. Co. W.L.L and Toyota launched the inaugural AUTO WORLD SHOW, held under the patronage of His Excellency the Minister of Commerce and Industry. The event was organized by Events & Venues Co. in collaboration with the Public Authority for Industry.

The show, which was held from September 22-27 at the Kuwait Fair Ground, provided a major platform for automotive dealers and enthusiasts to explore the latest trends, innovations, and developments in the automotive industry.

As one of the key partners of the event, ALSAYER exhibited a prominent pavilion covering 700 square meters, showcasing 12 of its most reliable cars. The display strategically

highlighted Toyota's motorsport brand, Gazoo Racing (GR), as well as environmentally friendly vehicles powered by hybrid electric technology. It also featured a race car from the GR Yaris Cup, Season 2, which concluded earlier this year.

Display of Toyota bZ4X

Toyota emphasizes "introducing sustainable vehicles practically" and is developing a full line-up of electrified vehicles—including HEVs, PHEVs, BEVs, and FCEVs—to provide customers with a wide range of choices. The new BEV series, Toyota bZ (Beyond Zero), follows this philosophy. The bZ4X, a medium-segment SUV-type BEV, is the first model in the Toyota bZ series.

The Toyota pavilion also showcased practical SUVs, including the RAV4, Corolla Cross, and Urban Cruiser, alongside legendary models such as the Land Cruiser and Prado, celebrated for their exceptional 4x4 capabilities.

Positioned as a dynamic and innovative automotive showcase, AUTO WORLD SHOW was designed as a "car enthusiast's paradise" and a platform highlighting new trends and technology in the automobile sector. The event attracted a large number of visitors and a wide range of exhibitors across dealerships, banks, insurance companies, garages, service centers, and automotive accessories and modifiers, establishing it as a key venue for both B2C and B2B partnerships.



# Informal Labor: Social Reality and Economic Implications



By Sheikha Suhaila Al-Sabah  
Managing Editor



“ The issue of construction labor is a major headache for those seeking housing, leading to delays in project completion and cost increases, sometimes reaching 100 percent in labor wages. Given the labor shortage and the chaos in the informal construction labor market, construction companies and property owners have resorted to employing informal workers, allowing these workers to dictate their terms and prices. ”

The Kuwaiti government is striving to eliminate informal labor, which is considered as having a negative impact on the political, security, social, and economic levels. The government is taking practical steps to regulate the labor market and provide a highly skilled workforce. Relevant authorities are working to establish an integrated professional system and an online platform to set professional standards and to conduct rigorous tests to assess the competence of workers before they join the private sector. The project is scheduled for completion by 2028, representing a significant transformation in regulating the labor market and eliminating unregulated practices. Sources indicate that the online platform will automate more than 20 professional tests and identify over 10 core job categories for recruitment.

The plan also includes signing memoranda of understanding with universities, educational institutions, and some non-profit organizations to develop and ensure the quality of these tests. The goal is not only to enhance professional skills, but also to strengthen regulatory oversight of professions and eliminate unqualified workers from the labor market. Informal labor poses a serious threat to society because it operates outside the law and beyond the reach of official authorities, making its members vulnerable to exploitation by employers.

This category includes surplus and unskilled workers, as well as those who entered the country illegally or whose residency permits have expired and were not renewed. These workers live in harsh conditions, including low wages, long working hours, and health risks, creating a breeding ground for crime and begging. The number of undocumented workers is large, prompting the authorities to adopt stricter measures, such as restructuring the tripartite committee to include new ministries and institutions.

The new structure includes the Ministry of Health and the Environment Authority, with the aim of expanding the scope of inspections, apprehending violators, and imposing harsher

penalties on employers who provide shelter to undocumented workers. This was accompanied by actual decisions to deport tens of thousands of violators this year. The danger posed by undocumented workers lies in their direct contribution to exacerbating the demographic imbalance, as foreigners constitute 3.5 million approx out of a total population of 4.9 million. Large numbers of them are concentrated in informal settlements, which aggravates social problems and negatively impacts the country's international image.

A report by the Audit Bureau showed that these workers increase the burden on government subsidies and exacerbate security, social, and economic challenges. While the government continues its deportation policy to address the situation, voices within the private sector are calling for a review of the official definition of undocumented workers. Contractors and construction company owners argue that the construction sector suffers from a severe labor shortage, and that restricting recruitment under the pretext of combating residency fraud has directly impacted citizens

through higher construction costs. Daily wages for laborers have more than doubled compared to pre-COVID-19 levels.

Experts emphasize that the solution does not lie solely in deportation, but rather in transforming undocumented workers into a legal, productive workforce by integrating them into the market and giving them opportunities to regularize their status. Following successful models in neighboring countries, undocumented workers were given the opportunity to regularize their legal status and participate legitimately in sectors that need them. These initiatives transformed the crisis into an economic opportunity, rather than allowing it to remain a social and security burden. While economic experts point to the urgent need to address the issue of informal employment to achieve sustainable development goals and provide decent work opportunities, officials warn that continued mismanagement of this issue could have serious consequences.

Poor management exacerbates the housing and construction crisis, driving up the prices of building materials, which were already affected

by global events such as the Russia-Ukraine war. This makes government intervention to regulate the market an urgent necessity. The issue of informal labor is at a crossroads between security measures and regulatory solutions, and between immediate fixes and long-term strategic planning. The challenges lie between demographic pressures and actual market needs, and between a policy of direct deportation and innovative, inclusive solutions.

The issue of construction labor is a major headache for those seeking housing, leading to delays in project completion and cost increases, sometimes reaching 100 percent in labor wages. Given the labor shortage and the chaos in the informal construction labor market, construction companies and property owners have resorted to employing informal workers, allowing these workers to dictate their terms and prices. In this situation, the need for a precise definition of 'informal labor' becomes clear: distinguishing between workers the market can do without and those whose presence is essential, even if they lack formal qualifications or specialized skills. The problem is essentially administrative and can be resolved by formally integrating those informal workers—who hold residency permits with job titles that do not reflect their actual work—into the labor market through construction companies. This requires allowing these companies to recruit workers after reviewing their budgets for the past five years and assessing their needs accordingly, thus preventing those who trade in residency permits from exploiting loopholes.

The experience of one of the neighboring countries in this matter should be taken into consideration. Instead of deporting those who violate residency regulations or those working in jobs other than their registered occupation, that country granted them a one-year grace period, which it called a 'rectification period'. A committee was established to compile the names of these individuals and their actual occupations, and businesses needing workers were then invited to submit their requirements. In this way, the problem was transformed into an opportunity that benefited both society and businesses. The question remains whether the country will succeed in transforming this group from a heavy burden into a productive economic force that contributes to national development. The solution lies in regulating the construction sector, particularly subcontracting agreements between companies and informal workers, as well as providing opportunities for businesses to hire foreign workers to foster competition, and offering opportunities for informal workers to regularize their status without resorting to deportation.

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# Embassy of Thailand hosts food festival, highlights Thai cuisine, culture

By **Ricky Laxa**  
Staff Writer

The Embassy of Thailand hosted the 'Thai Street-Food Festival' at its premises on 28 September, to promote awareness of Thai cuisine and culture as well as highlight the wide variety of Thai food products available in Kuwait.

The event drew a large crowd of visitors, including members of the diplomatic community, international organizations, media representatives, and business people.

Presiding over the opening ceremony, chargée d'Affaires a.i. at the Thai Embassy, Uraiwan Courtaud, underscored the cultural significance of Thai street food and invited

those present to participate in live cooking demonstrations and tasting sessions.

Featured dishes included Tom Yum soup, recently recognized as UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2024.

The festival offered a diverse program of activities, including interactive cooking demonstrations, food tastings, and cultural games highlighting Thai cuisine, tourist destinations, and traditions. Visitors also had the opportunity to explore Thai desserts and street food specialties, experiencing the flavors and cultural heritage of Thailand firsthand.

In collaboration with LuLu Hypermarket, the Embassy showcased a selection of Thai products available in Kuwait, allowing attendees to sample and purchase items that

reflect the quality and variety of Thai cuisine.

The embassy emphasized that the festival is part of its ongoing commitment to introducing authentic Thai food culture to Kuwait. Thai street-food, known for its affordability and rich flavors, represents a significant aspect of daily life in Thailand, offering a glimpse into the country's culinary traditions.

By bringing Thai cuisine and culture directly to Kuwait, the embassy hopes to foster greater understanding and appreciation of Thailand's culinary heritage among residents and citizens in Kuwait.

The event also aimed to build trust in Thai food products and encourage their wider adoption in local markets, reinforcing Thailand's reputation for high-quality, flavorful,

and diverse offerings.

Attendees praised the festival for its interactive format, educative elements, and the opportunity to experience the richness of Thai street food culture without leaving Kuwait.

Through initiatives like the Thai Street Food Festival, the embassy continues to strengthen cultural and culinary ties between Thailand and Kuwait, encouraging cultural exchange and tourism.

The event concluded with the embassy inviting all attendees to visit Thailand to explore its food culture and heritage firsthand, emphasizing that street food is not only a culinary delight but a window into the everyday lives and traditions of the Thai people.

## IWG Kuwait's Grand Mosque fosters cultural understanding, tolerance and Islamic heritage



The International Women's Group (IWG) headed by Mrs. Marika Kochlamazashvili, spouse of the Ambassador of the Republic of Georgia and President of the IWG visited The Grand Mosque of Kuwait, the largest religious landmark in the country and one of its most significant religious and cultural sites, on Sunday, September 28.

The visit aimed to promote cross-cultural understanding and provide an opportunity to learn more about Islamic heritage and traditional Arabic architecture in Kuwait.

The IWG members enjoyed an introductory tour of the mosque, where they learned about its distinguished history and architectural significance, which is a blend of Andalusian and Arabic styles, reflecting traditional Islamic architectural heritage that combines luxury and spirituality.

A brief presentation on the mosque's activities and the importance of its role in spreading Islamic and Kuwaiti culture was given by Ms. Fatima Al-Falah.

The members then visited the Arabic calligraphy art gallery, where they enjoyed viewing a collection of artworks of Arabic calligraphy that embody the aesthetics and authenticity of this ancient art form.

Mesmerized by the beauty of the architecture and the sacred atmosphere of the place, the IWG members expressed their admiration for the Grand Mosque and its religious and cultural symbolism, emphasizing that such initiatives contribute to spreading the values of tolerance, openness, and mutual understanding among peoples.

At the end of the visit, Ms. Marika Kochlamazashvili signed the guestbook, expressing her gratitude for the warm welcome and the great hospitality by the mosque's administration, led by Dr. Bader Maajoun Al-Dhafiri, Director of the Grand Mosque. She also presented on behalf of IWG board and members two commemorative shields to Dr. Al-Dhafiri and to Ms. Reem Mohammed Al-Ghunaim, Head of the Visits Department.

From his side, Dr. Al-Dhafiri presented a commemorative shield to the IWG's President, Ms. Kochlamazashvili, and to the group's Vice-President, Ms. Rima Al-Khalidi, spouse of the ambassador of the State of Palestine.

The mosque administration then generously distributed commemorative gifts to the members, including a book translating the meanings of the Holy Quran into English.



## UIS launches AI/STEM lab to enhance 21st-century learning

The United Indian School (UIS) inaugurated its new AI/STEM Lab on September 3, signaling a major step toward integrating advanced technology into its curriculum and equipping students with essential 21st-century skills.

The inauguration, simple yet meaningful, was led by Mrs. Tessy Chandy, Vice Chairperson, and attended by key school officials including Mr. Joel Jacob, Executive Administrator, Mr. John Thomas, Purchase Manager, Mr. Radhakrishnan C, Principal, and Mr. Varun from Creya Learning. Vice Principals, Heads of Departments, along with a group of enthusiastic teachers and students, also participated in the event.

The new lab is expected to provide students with hands-on experience in artificial intelligence and STEM-related projects, fostering innovation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills essential for future academic and professional pursuits.

The AI Lab is designed to give students early exposure to emerging technologies, providing practical skills in coding, data management, robotics, and ethical AI practices. The facility encourages exploration and collaboration through two specialized technology wings:

**Robotics Lab:** Students gain hands-on experience in designing, building, and programming robotic prototypes, fostering creativity, engineering skills, and problem-solving abilities.

**IoT (Internet of Things) Lab:** This lab allows students to explore smart technologies, sensor

networks, and data-driven applications by connecting devices and systems in real-world scenarios.

The AI/STEM Lab is equipped with advanced resources to foster an innovative learning environment:

**Hardware:** AI-enabled computers, robotics kits, and IoT devices.

**Software:** Specialized AI learning platforms, including Tynker, Scratch AI extensions, and Python.

**Learning content:** A dedicated AI curriculum, project templates, digital resources, journals, and assessment tools.

The principal noted that the integrated learning environment will serve as a launchpad for students to develop innovative projects and acquire the practical skills essential for thriving in the digital age. The new AI/STEM Lab positions UIS students as future-ready collaborators in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.



# Kuwait improves its ranking in combating human trafficking

*The reclassification reflects Kuwait's determination to meet international standards in combating human trafficking and positions the country as a regional leader in protection and prevention measures. It also signals the state's readiness to continue reform, enhance victim support, and maintain momentum in aligning with global best practices.*

Public Prosecution has described Kuwait's improved international standing in combating human trafficking as an outcome of sustained efforts on both the legislative and executive levels. Kuwait moved from Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 2 in the US State Department's 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report.

In a statement last week, the Permanent National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons and Migrant Smuggling, emphasized the practical steps taken by Kuwait to strengthen national mechanisms to fight human trafficking.

Among these steps was the reorganization of the Capital Prosecution Office to specialize in handling cases of human trafficking and migrant smuggling, ensuring a more targeted and professional approach.

The Prosecution also pointed to the issuance of internal circulars designed to standardize investigation procedures. This move has been

accompanied by the active participation of its members in specialized training programs and workshops conducted in line with international standards. These initiatives, it noted, have raised the efficiency of personnel and improved their capacity to address the complexities of trafficking cases.

The Public Prosecution reaffirmed its commitment to working closely with the Permanent National Committee, and enhancing coordination with relevant state bodies. The collaborative approach seeks to unify response mechanisms, ensure faster case handling, and bolster Kuwait's adherence to its international obligations in combating trafficking in persons.

The statement further expressed gratitude to the Minister of Justice and Chairman of the Committee, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, and to all committee members for their efforts. The Prosecution underscored its readiness to continue supporting the committee's initiatives



and to back any measures that contribute to strengthening Kuwait's international reputation in this field.

Al-Sumait himself hailed the reclassification as a significant milestone, noting that Kuwait had been on the Tier 2 Watch List for the past

three years. He explained that the upgrade reflects tangible reforms, including the adoption of stronger legal frameworks, improved institutional coordination, and enhanced victim protection programs.

He added that Kuwait's progress sends a clear signal of the country's determination to meet international standards and address longstanding concerns in the field of labor exploitation and human trafficking. At the same time, he acknowledged that the new classification also carries a responsibility for Kuwait to pursue ongoing reforms and continue implementing its national plan against trafficking in persons until 2028.

The Public Prosecution concluded that Kuwait's advancement in the global ranking is not only recognition of reforms already achieved, but is also a motivation to sustain momentum and ensure that efforts remain aligned with international best practices.

## MoCI committed to market integrity in precious metals

Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) announced that a total of 59.31 tons of precious metals were stamped for authenticity during the first seven months of 2025, generating fees estimated at more than KD1.75 million

According to data from the ministry's Gold Department, operations peaked in April with 26.58 tons labeled, while January, February, and March recorded 3.22, 3.17, and 5.57 tons respectively. The remaining months included 12.79 tons in May, 3.92 tons in June, and 4.09 tons in July.

Silver topped the list of stamped metals, with 32,485 tons marked for fees totalling KD324,920. Gold came second with 20.23 tons, generating over KD1.02 million in fees. Other categories included 2.55 tons of gold inlaid with precious stones worth KD182,210; 1.3 tons of silver inlaid with stones worth KD32,528, and one ton of gold inlaid with diamonds valued at KD107,400.

Watches and accessories also accounted for a significant share of stamping. The Ministry reported that 0.05-sized watches totaled 708.9 kilograms, while stone-inlaid



accessories reached 663.44 kilograms. Watches sized 0.1 amounted to 328.59 kilograms, stainless steel-ceramic watches to 15.8 kilograms, and silver watches with diamonds to 668 grams. Altogether, stamped watches amounted to 1.04 tons.

Other stamped items covered a wide range of materials, including titanium with diamonds, synthetic stones, diamond-set accessories, platinum, and diamond-set precious metals. The Ministry noted that approximately 15,260 pieces of plated accessories were stamped, generating KD1.53 million in fees. Additionally, 8,634

gemstone prayer beads were stamped, with fees of KD4,317.

To maintain market integrity, the Precious Metals Department enforces strict measures against unstamped or counterfeit gold. Inspection teams are dispatched to stores found in violation, with unstamped pieces seized and referred to the Prosecution Office.

Counterfeit cases involving fake gold or copper-filled jewelry undergo lab verification before legal action is taken. The Ministry highlighted that the adoption of the new official stamp under Resolution No. 114 of 2021 has strengthened market regulation, alongside measures such as a comprehensive ban on cash transactions to reduce risks.

Meanwhile, local gold prices rose by 0.76% yesterday, with a gram of 24-karat gold reaching 36.885 dinars, compared to 36.605 dinars in the previous session. Prices for 22-karat, 21-karat, and 18-karat gold also climbed to KD33.843, KD32.307, and KD27.691 dinars respectively, while the price for an ounce of gold reached KD1,147.24.

## Jazeera Airways resumes four weekly flights to Abu Dhabi and Al Ain

Jazeera Airways marked the resumption of flights to Abu Dhabi and Al Ain with inaugural celebrations held at Jazeera Terminal 5 in Kuwait and in Abu Dhabi.

The airline has launched two weekly flights each from the Kuwait International Airport (KWI) to Zayed International Airport (AUH) and Al Ain International Airport (AAN).

The milestone was attended by Mohammad Al Mousa, Vice Chairman; Barathan Pasupathi, CEO; and Paul Carroll, CCO of Jazeera Airways, alongside H.E. Dr. Matar Hamed Al Neyadi, Ambassador of the UAE to Kuwait. This expansion strengthens connectivity between Kuwait and the UAE, offering passengers greater convenience and affordability. With the addition of Abu Dhabi and Al Ain, Jazeera Airways now serves three destinations across the UAE—enhancing travel and trade between the two nations.

As part of the celebrations, the guests also visited Jazeera



Airways' Hayakom Lounge which will be opening soon to cater to passengers at Jazeera Terminal 5 (T5).

## Kuwait issues first sovereign bonds since 2017

Kuwait announced the issuance of sovereign bonds worth US\$11.25 billion on 1 October, marking the country's return to the global bond market, after a lapse of eight years since the last issuance of public debt in 2017.

In a statement elaborating on the sovereign debt instrument, the Ministry of Finance indicated that the floated bonds were divided into three tranches; the first composed of a tranche worth \$3.25 billion with a three-year maturity period and a 40+ basis point over US Treasury, the second valued at \$3 billion with a five-year maturity at 40+ basis points over US Treasury, and a third tranche worth \$5 billion with a 10-year maturity at 50+ basis points. The statement added that these differences are lower than the first sovereign issuance in 2017.

The ministry added that the subscriptions were oversubscribed, exceeding supply by 2.5 times, with the orders record posting nearly \$28 billion. More than 66 percent of the allocations shifted to investors outside the Middle East and North Africa, with 26 percent in the US, 30 percent in Europe and the United Kingdom, and ten percent in Asia.

Minister of Electricity, Water, Renewable Energy and the Acting Minister of Finance, Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment, Dr. Sabeeh Al-Mukhaizeem, said in the statement that the response to the historic issuance embodied confidence of the international markets in Kuwait's financial power, its prudent policies and solid financial reserves.

Pointing out that the competitive pricing reflected Kuwait's status as a distinctive sovereign source, the minister added that the issuance would not only meet the country's financing needs, but also boost Kuwait's stature in the international markets and support its partnerships with the international investors in line with Kuwait vision, New Kuwait 2035.

Kuwait's issuance, described as the largest global sovereign issuance in 2025, also witnessed one of the biggest order records this year, underscoring the confidence of investors in the Kuwaiti economy and the reform programs initiated by the government over the long-term.

The issuance was guided by Citi Bank, Goldman Sachs International, HSBC, JPMorgan, Mizuho Bank, as joint international coordinators, in addition to participation on part of the Bank of China, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China as non-active managers.



## Embassy of Guinea marks 67th anniversary of Independence

### The Times Kuwait Report

**E**mbassy of Guinea hosted a reception to mark the 67th anniversary of Guinea's independence, bringing together diplomats, government officials, and distinguished guests. The gathering celebrated a milestone in Guinea's modern history and its aspirations for continued growth and partnership, while also highlighting the deep ties between Guinea and Kuwait.

In his address, Ambassador of Guinea H.E. Mamady Touré recalled 2 October 1958, as a turning point for his nation, when the late President Ahmed Sékou Touré declared independence—making Guinea the first

French-speaking country in sub-Saharan Africa to do so and igniting a wider movement for freedom across the continent.

He emphasized that, under the leadership of President General Mamady Doumbouya, Guinea is pursuing comprehensive reforms to strengthen democracy, fight corruption, modernize infrastructure, and raise living standards.

Ambassador Touré highlighted Kuwait's role as a distinguished partner in Guinea's development, praising the Kuwait Fund for financing key projects in health, education, rural development, and infrastructure, and announced the upcoming inauguration of two major projects in Conakry to ease congestion

and boost urban growth.

He also called on Kuwaiti and international investors to tap into Guinea's vast natural and agricultural resources, while expressing deep appreciation for Kuwait's leadership and commending the Guinean community in Kuwait for their positive role, affirming that Independence Day is both a celebration and a call to deepen friendship and cooperation.

Concluding his remarks, Touré expressed deep gratitude to Kuwait's leadership — His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and praised the efforts of the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in advancing bilateral ties.

Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs, Ambassador Nayef Al-Mudhaf, who was the chief guest affirmed that Kuwait's relations with the Republic of Guinea are historic and long-standing. He also emphasized the important role played by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, which has extended 14 loans worth nearly \$64 million to Conakry for infrastructure and road projects that have supported the country's development.

Noting that trade between the two countries is on line with other African nations, he revealed that around five agreements are currently under negotiation, including a labor agreement now under active discussion, which he expects to be finalized soon.

## Mesmerizing performance in Kuwait marks 'Moscow Seasons' debut in the Middle East



### The Times Kuwait Report

**M**oscow Symphony Orchestra made its debut appearance in the Middle East with a stupendous performance at Kuwait's Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center last week. The concert captivated the audience, who responded with enthusiastic applause throughout the performance and gave the orchestra a standing ovation lasting several minutes at the finale.

Representatives of Moscow City emphasized that the event—attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Hamad Jaber Al-Ali, Minister of Information and Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, along with a large number of officials, ambassadors, and Kuwaiti spectators—marked an important cultural milestone and conveyed a genuine message of friendship between the Russian and Kuwaiti peoples.

In his address to the gathering, Ambassador of Russia H.E. Vladimir Geltov welcomed the audience, describing the event as "a special occasion to enjoy some of the masterpieces in classical music, performed by the Moscow Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Maestro Ivan Rudin." He underlined that Russian culture, and music in particular, "is an authentic part of the world's human heritage, a universal language understood by millions without the need for translation."

For his part, Minister Al-Mutairi expressed his delight at attending the concert, describing it as "a reflection of the distinguished level of relations between Kuwait and the Russian Federation, and a testament to the depth of historical ties binding the two friendly nations."

He stressed that, under the guidance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and His Highness the Prime Minister



Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah, Kuwait is keen to strengthen cultural and tourism cooperation with Russia.

He added that such evenings "serve as a bridge for cultural rapprochement and dialogue, founded on mutual respect and appreciation of the values of art and creativity."

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Chairman of Moscow's Tourism Committee, Bolat Nurmukhanov, celebrated the launch of

'Moscow Seasons', for the very first time in the Middle East in Kuwait, and incidentally right on World Tourism Day. He called the event "not just an artistic performance but a message of friendship linking Moscow and Kuwait."

Revealing that Moscow welcomed more than 16 million visitors last year, including thousands from the Gulf, and especially from Kuwait, he invited Kuwaitis to explore the city's cultural and tourism opportunities through the 'Discover Moscow' website.

The evening's program featured a selection of global classical masterpieces, including Scheherazade by Rimsky-Korsakov, The Firebird by Stravinsky, and The Nutcracker by Tchaikovsky. Moscow Seasons Festival, which was held from 25 to 28 September, marked a historic debut outside Russia's borders, and brought a vibrant celebration of Russian culture, hospitality, and modern lifestyle to audiences in Kuwait.

## Technical support and capacity-building key to boost human rights

**K**uwait's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva reaffirmed the country's strong interest in promoting technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights. The remarks by Diplomatic Attache

Rahf Khuraibet came during discussions on the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights concerning technical assistance and capacity-building before the UN Human Rights Council held in Geneva last week.

She further stressed the importance of these instruments in helping countries fulfill their international obligations and in enhancing the ability of developing nations to contribute to justice and sustainable development amid current global challenges. Khuraibet underscored the significance of technical assistance and capacity-building as a manifestation of the true spirit of international cooperation calling for these processes

to remain technical and professional away from politicization or selectivity. Pointing to progress in integrating human rights principles into national policies and in strengthening institutional capacities, she added that it was important to address funding shortfalls that pose risks to the continuity of such programs.

She renewed Kuwait's commitment to continuing constructive engagement with all partners in order to maximize the effectiveness of technical cooperation programs and further develop their mechanisms to achieve concrete and lasting results.

# Shared values, cultural closeness, cements Spanish-Kuwaiti ties

*Spanish-Kuwaiti relations based on shared values, cultural affinities and contacts on the people to people level, have grown steadily over the past many decades.*

By Reaven D'Souza  
Executive Managing Editor

In a recent interview with The Times Kuwait, Ambassador of Spain H.E. Manuel Hernández Gamallo spoke at length on Spanish-Kuwaiti relations, and the potential for immense growth in various fields going forward.

He began by emphasizing that the ties between Spain and Kuwait are "deep-rooted and solid, based on shared values, cultural closeness, and strong people-to-people ties. He added that the next phase in bilateral relations will witness added momentum in cooperation across various fields, including in political, economic and cultural spheres.

## How would you describe the current state of diplomatic relations between Spain and Kuwait?

Kuwait and Spain have maintained diplomatic relations since 1961, shortly after Kuwait's independence. The relations were reinforced by mutual respect, friendship and brotherly relation between their royal houses. Those ties, based on shared values, cultural affinities and contacts on the people to people level, have grown steadily over the past many decades, particularly in economic and commercial spheres.

## What are the current priorities for the Spanish Embassy in Kuwait?

We intend to organize a new round of political consultations in the coming months, this time in Madrid, which will follow the political consultations held in Kuwait in July 2024. At a political level, we are working to agree on the modalities for an important high-level visit in the near future.

We are also working on the follow-up to the Economic Joint Committee that was held in Kuwait last May, and attended by delegations chaired by the Spanish Vice-minister of Trade and the Kuwaiti State Secretary of Finance. On that occasion, a meeting, followed by a networking event, took place in the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce, which was very well attended by Kuwaiti and Spanish economic operators from different fields, including from civil infrastructure, water management, railway systems, health, smart farming, renewables, defense, naval capabilities, communications, radar detection and others. We are continuously working in order to increase the number of Spanish companies contributing to Kuwait's progress and prosperity.

## What are the biggest opportunities for Spanish-Kuwait cooperation?

At the bilateral and economic level, opportunities span multiple domains, especially in the context of global shifts toward sustainability, cooperation in renewables and environmental policies, Spain's green initiatives can play a role in some of the policies outlined in Kuwait's Vision 2035. For instance, Spain can share expertise in solar and wind technologies, aiding Kuwait's diversification from hydrocarbons. Current and future areas of cooperation include civil infrastructure, transportation, logistics, food security and water management.

Spain can contribute to Kuwait's food security strategy, drawing on advanced technologies and long-standing expertise in smart farming, efficient irrigation systems, water management and desalination technologies, greenhouse innovation, biotechnology, and advanced logistics. Spain can also offer integrated solutions that combine renewable energy with food production, from solar-powered irrigation to smart farming practices that raise efficiency while protecting the environment.

I would also like to point out that food is an essential part of Spanish cultural identity. Our country is the fourth agri-food power in Europe and tenth in the world. Due to the quality and extensive range of items, the Spanish agri-food industry is highly regarded internationally. Spain boasts nearly 30,000 agri-food companies and covers the entire value chain. I believe these capabilities align directly with Kuwait's priorities of ensuring a reliable and sustainable food supply despite challenging climatic conditions.

Another of our main ambitions is the cooperation in healthcare and human empowerment, a growing area with a vast array of possibilities for more cultural and educational exchanges. Medical tourism is also on the increase, with more and more Kuwaitis seeking treatment in Spain. In the field of infrastructure and construction, Spanish engineering firms have a proven track record in Kuwait, having been involved in Kuwait's infrastructure improvement, such as highways and airport expansions.



There is also much potential for cooperation in the academic, cultural and sport fields, where Spain has much to offer. Spain has 91 universities—50 public and 41 private—distributed across the national territory. Spain excels in fields such as medicine, agriculture, biotechnology, biochemistry and renewable energies, all of which are fields of interest for Kuwaiti students. The Spanish university system is a highly internationalized one, with 96 bachelor degrees and 389 master degrees taught in English. In 2025, Kuwait granted the 'excellent' level to a list of specialties taught in the universities of Madrid, Navarra and Barcelona. Kuwait has also recognized the academic degrees delivered by forty-five Spanish universities.

According to our information, in 2023 there were 89 students registered in the Spanish University system, although many of them are in the framework of mobility programs. One of our goals is to promote the Spanish universities in the context of the Kuwaiti government's scholarship system, so that more and

**Spain can contribute to Kuwait's food security strategy, drawing on advanced technologies and long-standing expertise in smart farming, efficient irrigation systems, water management and desalination technologies, greenhouse innovation, biotechnology, and advanced logistics. Spain can also offer integrated solutions that combine renewable energy with food production, from solar-powered irrigation to smart farming practices that raise efficiency while protecting the environment.**

more Kuwaiti students can receive higher education in Spain.

## Are there any upcoming joint initiatives or agreements between the two countries?

Several Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) are currently in the pipeline, including on industrial exports development, on industrial cooperation, on the standardization cooperation and on Tourism cooperation. We are also working on several MoUs on educational issues: for instance the MoU between the Spanish High Council of Scientific Investigations (CSIC) and the University of Kuwait and a MOU for cooperation in sports.

## What areas of cooperation are seeing the most growth?

While in 2024 the bilateral trade between Spain and Kuwait reflected a balanced dynamic, in the first half of 2025 Spanish imports from Kuwait have increased substantially, surpassing 650 million Euros in just six months—a 280 percent increase compared to the same period of the previous year. This remarkable growth demonstrates Spain's strong commitment to deepening its economic ties with Kuwait and its recognition of Kuwait as a strategic partner in the region.

On the export side, Spain recorded 135 million Euros in the first half of 2025, reflecting continued demand for Spanish goods. Our exports to Kuwait are quite diverse, ranging from industrial machinery and mechanical equipment to high-quality ceramics, perfumes and luxury goods. This mix shows the depth of Spain's manufacturing base. It is important to note that those figures do not fully capture the volume of investment flows or stocks between our two countries.

Kuwaiti citizens are currently leading the GCC investment in real estate in Spain. Historically, Kuwaiti investors have played a key role in the development of iconic Spanish hotels and commercial properties, in cities such as Madrid, Marbella, and Barcelona.

## What advice would you give to Kuwaiti investors interested in Spain?

Spain welcomes Kuwaiti entrepreneurs and investors to explore opportunities in our country, which stands as a modern, dynamic, and competitive economy within the European Union. Spain offers a strategic geographical location, serving as a gateway not only to Europe but also to Latin America and North Africa.

Spain is a global leader in renewable energy, infrastructure, railways, tourism, and agri-food industries, sectors where partnerships with Kuwaiti companies can generate substantial value. Spain offers state of the art infrastructure, advanced technological capabilities, tax incentives and a business environment that actively promotes foreign investment.

Furthermore, Spain offers stability, transparency and significant growth potential. Whether you are interested in green energy, digital transformation, or healthcare, Spain can match your ambitions. The Embassy of Spain remains fully committed to supporting Kuwaiti investors and facilitating stronger ties with Spanish companies. Our commercial and trade section is providing contacts, disseminating information and organizing agendas for the Spanish entrepreneurs who wish to explore Kuwait's business opportunities.

## Are there any cultural Exchange programs or upcoming Spanish cultural events in Kuwait?

Spain and Kuwait enjoy a rich history of cultural exchange, and our embassy is eager to expand this relationship by promoting cultural events, with a special attention to those cultural manifestations that point towards a close cultural legacy. For instance, in the last year, our embassy has supported concerts of Spanish music in the AlQurain Festival, also in the Yarmouk Theater, under the auspices of Dar al Athar al Islamiya. We are currently collaborating with the National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters in the organization of a concert with an important Spanish chamber orchestra. Another line of work is what we call the 'Scientific diplomacy', a program our embassy launched in Kuwait in 2023. In this framework, we have organized several events and exhibitions in collaboration with Kuwait's institutions.

## What initiatives exist to promote the Spanish language in Kuwait?

In order to satisfy the increasing demand and to provide the Kuwaiti students with an official certificate, an examination facility has been set as the official DELE examination center in the French Institute in Kuwait, so that the Kuwaiti students can obtain this diploma from Institute Cervantes.

Our Attaché of Education has been in contact with the Kuwaiti Education authorities and Kuwaiti universities, to explore the opportunities for the Spanish language to have a presence in Kuwait's educational system. Our Embassy participated last winter for the first time in the 'Kuwait International Higher Education Exhibition'.

We are disseminating information on studying Spanish language in Kuwait, and we regularly participate in local initiatives such as the 'European Day of Languages'. We also maintain our links with Kuwait's Hispanists.

## What makes Spain a unique travel destination for Kuwaiti tourists?

According to figures collected in July, Spain received 55, 5 million tourists during the six first months of 2025, breaking all previous records. In 2024, 93.759 tourists traveled to Spain, consolidating our country between the second and the third place in the market.

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# Czech Embassy commemorates Statehood Day with Special Mass honoring St. Wenceslas

## The Times Kuwait Report

The Embassy of the Czech Republic celebrated the Czech Statehood Day at the Holy Family Co-Cathedral with a special Mass, marking the second consecutive year the event has been held. The Mass honored St. Wenceslas, the Czech patron saint and a symbol of compassion, peace, and pious

deeds. Around ten Ambassadors and dozen of other diplomats attended the mass that was celebrated by Appstolic Nunci Eugene Nugent in the presence of the Apostolic Vicar for North Arabia Bishop Aldo Berardi.

St. Wencesl 907-938), also known as Václav, was the Duke of Bohemia and a revered figure in Czech history. Renowned for his deep faith and dedication to the welfare of his people, he

prioritized peace over personal power.

Czech Statehood Day, celebrated annually on September 28, together with the feast of St. Wenceslas, a Premyslid prince and saint patron of Bohemia an

Following the Velvet Revolution in 1989, an initiative was launched to include St. Wenceslas Day among the nation's official holidays. In 2000, the Czech House of Commons officially

declared it a public holiday, recognizing its historical and cultural significance. Proclaimed a saint three years after his death in 938, Wenceslas is the first Czech saint.

The Embassy's Mass offered an opportunity for the Czech community in Kuwait to reflect on the enduring values of love, peace, and compassion, encouraging all to foster harmony in their own families and communities.

## EU-GCC Talks Aim to Advance Mutual Interests, Address Global Challenges

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Regardless of these disparities, the GCC has over the years played an increasingly pivotal role in global affairs, underscored in part by its strategic proximity to geopolitically volatile regions and sea lanes vital to global trade. The region's immense hydrocarbon assets and the influence wielded by its enormous sovereign wealth funds have also been persuasive elements in mitigating conflicts and in addressing crises regionally and internationally. Its sizable contributions to global humanitarian and development aid have also stood the region in good stead.

However, the region's promising outlook and ambitious outreach faces several challenges, including from geopolitical fallout, economic instability linked to energy prices, increasing global shift towards renewable energy, and the generally slow pace of economic diversification and social fiscal and political reforms. The future of the GCC is likely to be shaped by effectively addressing these challenges, in part by forming strategic partnership with other countries and regional blocs, as well as by transforming the GCC into a more cohesive political and economic entity.

Despite the EU and GCC not sharing geographic proximity, or cultural, social,



political, and economic affinities, what they do have in common is a convergence in viewpoints on many global issues, their shared humanitarian ideals, and a strategic interest to redefine their relationship into a more cohesive and influential structure, capable of addressing the increasingly complex and myriad global challenges.

Core topics on the agenda of the upcoming Joint Council meeting include deepening the Strategic Partnership through strengthening political dialogue and institutional frameworks; monitoring implementation of the 2024 Summit's Joint Statement and ensuring accountability for agreed actions, and establishing clear timeframes and structures for their implementation, as

well as setting milestones for cooperation and progress across sectors.

On economic and environmental relations, both parties will seek to expand trade and investment flows; explore the prospects of reviving the long-stalled EU-GCC Free Trade Agreement; align their perspectives in international forums on climate change, sustainable development goals, and green technologies; leverage the digital and green energy transformations; build environmental resilience; cooperate in clean energy, carbon-capture technologies, support energy and food security, and enhance supply-chain resilience.

On the security side the two sides will be looking at augmenting joint efforts on counter-terrorism, maritime security, cyber and hybrid threats, non-proliferation, disaster response, regional security frameworks, promoting de-escalation, and addressing regional conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, Lebanon, and in relations with Iran. Both the EU and GCC will reiterate their strong support for conflict mediation, multilateralism, and the rules-based order that fully respects international law.

Other key security related issues that will be deliberated during the ministerial meeting include ongoing geopolitical crises and conflicts, safeguarding freedom of navigation in strategic routes against attacks; cooperation in counterterrorism, cyber threats, non-proliferation, disaster response, and military-to-military cooperation, as well as whether GCC states will participate in EU naval missions or align with regional security operations;

Notwithstanding the bonhomie surrounding the talks, the gathering is not expected to be without its share of challenges, including overcoming issues identified in translating the Brussels summit declarations into actionable projects and finding budgets to implement them. Additionally, the two sides will need to

address the EU's stricter emission tariffs levied by its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) that impacts GCC exports such as steel, aluminium, and petrochemicals.

The two sides will also need to review the EU-GCC Free Trade Agreement to find a way forward over issues of public procurement, regulatory alignment, and on energy products. Meanwhile, the new EU Council mandate to negotiate bilateral Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPAs) with each country, rather than with the entire bloc, on issues related to trade, energy, and security will also be up for discussion at the meeting.

The talks will also address GCC demand for easier access to EU states through visa-free travel to the EU and Schengen zones; expanding cooperation in cultural, educational, digital infrastructure, and student mobility through the EU's Erasmus program for education, training, youth and sport, and the Horizon Europe funding program for scientific research and innovation, as well as building deeper understanding through people to people engagements, are also likely to feature on the agenda.

The two sides will also need to reach a consensus, or agree to differ, on their divergent foreign policy priorities. This is particularly relevant on issues where the two sides hold different perspectives, such as on sanctions against Russia over its Ukraine conflict, and on fallout from the recent 'snapback' sanctions imposed on Iran over its nuclear file.

Additional sticky points in EU-GCC talks will include finding a balance, in their responses to geopolitical shifts underway globally, and in addressing the EU's emphasis on human rights, labor standards, freedom of expression, without infringing on the sovereignty and sensitivity of GCC states. How much the ministerial meeting will push on these norms without damaging broader cooperation will be a key indicator of the success of upcoming talks in Kuwait.

The EU-GCC Strategic Partnership has proven critics, skeptical about pragmatic results emerging from closer integration between the two blocs, to be woefully wrong. The cooperation and partnership of the two blocs have over the years facilitated joint humanitarian initiatives around the world, advanced mutual interests, and contributed significantly to addressing various global challenges.

The potential of the EU-GCC strategic partnership to achieve much more in the future is undoubted.

## Shared values, cultural closeness, cements Spanish-Kuwaiti ties

### CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

The people-to-people relations are a big asset in our bilateral relations. Spain has long been a favorite destination for Kuwaiti travelers. We received 48,500 tourists from Kuwait in 2024. According to our prediction, the figure could be slightly superior this year. We congratulate ourselves for the approval two years ago of more open Schengen visa regulations for Kuwaitis and other citizens of the Gulf.

There is also an excellent piece of news: the direct flight connection between Kuwait and Madrid will be operating again in October, adding to the already existing direct route between Kuwait and Barcelona and to

the seasonal connection between Kuwait and Málaga. I warmly congratulate Kuwait Airways for that.

"Spain is a land of opportunities, whether for investment, education, or tourism. We invite our friends in Kuwait to explore the other side of our country, beyond its beaches and resorts, and to discover its cultural and natural treasures, so as to continue strengthening our friendship and cooperation."

### Can you tell us a bit about the National Day of Spain?

The Spanish National Day on 12 October, marks the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas in 1492, a date that changed the course of World history. There is a double commemoration here: the year 1492 also culminated in the formation of Spain as a unified state, based on the plurality and diversity of the different Spanish lands, and reflecting the cultural heritage and language that Spain shares with 600 million people around the world.



# 'Parent-Child Whisperer' Launches Transformative Parenting Programs in Gulf



**By Hermoine Macura-Noble**  
Special to The Times Kuwait

Families across the Gulf will soon have access to a groundbreaking approach to parenting as Veenu Keller, widely known as the 'Parent-Child Whisperer', introduces her globally recognized methodology to the region. With nearly two decades of experience in transforming family dynamics, Keller aims to help parents reclaim their influence, restore trust, and build deeper connections with their children.

Keller, an internationally respected speaker, author, and coach, has earned her reputation by turning even the most challenging family situations into stories of hope and harmony. At the heart of her work is the Parent-Child Whisperer Method, an innovative framework that blends compassion, structure, and emotional intelligence. This unique balance enables parents to set boundaries while also nurturing open

communication and trust within the household. "Today's children are tomorrow's leaders," Keller emphasized during her announcement. "In 20 or 30 years, the values we cultivate in our homes will shape the societies we live in. If we want communities built on respect, connection, and resilience, that work begins now; with the way we raise our children."

One of Keller's signature offerings is the In-Home Turn Around program, a transformative 4-6 day experience in which she lives with families to observe real-life dynamics. By witnessing firsthand the struggles and stress points within a household, Keller is able to guide parents and children through a process of reshaping behaviors, communication patterns, and relationships. Families who have undergone the program describe it as life-changing, with sustained improvements reinforced through ongoing coaching long after

the immersive experience ends.

Keller is quick to point out that the parenting landscape has shifted dramatically over the past few decades. "In the past, respect was demanded, but children rarely felt safe enough to express themselves," she explained. "Today, many parents are hesitant to assert authority for fear of upsetting their children, and as a result, social media and outside influences are shaping kids more than their own families. My mission is to return parents to their rightful place of influence while giving children the safety and connection they need."

Having spoken on international stages alongside leaders in psychology and personal development, Keller brings both expertise and empathy to her work. Her upcoming programs in the UAE will focus on bridging generational divides, strengthening family bonds, and empowering parents to navigate modern challenges with confidence.



**Veenu Keller**  
Parent-Child Whisperer

For Keller, the expansion into the Gulf region marks the next step in a growing global movement. Her approach has already touched families across North America, Europe, and Asia, and she now hopes to empower households in the Gulf to embrace a future where parenting is proactive, compassionate, and transformative.

Families, schools, and organizations in the Gulf who wish to learn more or participate in her programs are encouraged to connect directly with Keller for interviews, coaching opportunities, and speaking engagements.

As parents everywhere continue to grapple with the pressures of modern life, Keller's message is clear: the key to shaping tomorrow's world lies in how we nurture today's children.

**Hermoine Macura-Noble**

*The first Australian English speaking News Anchor in the Middle East. She is also the Author of Faces of the Middle East and Founder of US-based 501c3 charity - The House of Rest which helps to ease the suffering of victims of war. For more from our Contributing Editor, you can follow her on Instagram, @hello\_hermoine*

## FIU revises guidelines to combat illegal money transactions

Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), an independent legal entity charged with monitoring and combating money laundering and terrorist financing in Kuwait, has issued revised guidelines for money exchange companies. The guidelines, circulated by the Central Bank of Kuwait to all money exchange companies, outlines warning signs of fraudulent transactions, to help strengthen oversight and detect possible cases of money laundering or terrorist financing.

The guidelines emphasize the need to monitor high-value or recurring transactions that do not align with a customer's income, profession, or declared activity. It also stressed the need for customers to clearly explain the source of funds in large or repeated transfers. Refusal to disclose information, vague answers, or sudden increases in transaction volume and frequency without commercial justification were cited as key indicators of suspicious behavior.



Exchange companies were also urged to be alert to transactions involving high-risk transfers or remittances to sanctioned jurisdictions, conflict zones, and offshore centers known for secrecy.

Other signs include frequent use of multiple agents or locations for transfers, third-party transactions without a clear legal relationship, and unusually large cash exchanges without legitimate purposes.

The FIU also warned against practices such as converting large sums of money into foreign currency and then back into local currency within a short period without a clear economic rationale.

Attention was drawn to clients whose declared profile does not match their financial activity, such as domestic workers or inactive clients making high-value transfers to multiple recipients abroad.

Regarding terrorist financing, the guide highlighted risks linked to transfers to border areas, regions with limited financial infrastructure, or areas associated with terrorist activity.

It also cautioned against the misuse of charities and non-profit organizations to channel funds under the guise of humanitarian or religious purposes without due transparency.

The FIU summarized seven common warning signs:

- Sudden increases in transaction volume,
- Use of multiple agents or websites,
- Transfers to off-shore banking jurisdictions known for secrecy in money transfers
- Unexplained third-party transactions
- Large cash exchanges without justification
- Round-trip currency conversions,
- Suspicious activity involving charities.

EXCLUSIVE TO THE TIMES KUWAIT

# Money Will Not Be Revolutionized



**Nouriel Roubini, Brunello Rosa**

Nouriel Roubini is Professor Emeritus at New York University's Stern School of Business and the author of *Megathreats: Ten Dangerous Trends That Imperil Our Future, and How to Survive Them*

Brunello Rosa is CEO of Rosa & Roubini and the co-author (with Casey Larsen) of *Smart Money: How Digital Currencies Will Shape the New World Order*

What does the future hold for money and payment systems? While it will surely feature unprecedented technologies, foreseeing the full picture requires historical context.

Traditionally, money and payment systems have run on a combination of base money (issued by a central bank) and private-sector money, typically issued by commercial banks through demand deposits, credit cards, and so forth. Since newer fintech payment systems such as Alipay, WeChat, Venmo, or PayPal are still linked to bank deposits and credit cards, they represent evolution, not revolution.

As for Bitcoin and other decentralized crypto assets, none has become a currency because none is a unit of account, scalable means of payment, stable store of value, or numeraire (a benchmark for other similar assets). El Salvador went so far as to declare Bitcoin legal tender, but, at best, some 5 percent of transactions for goods and services are settled with it.

True, with the Trump administration creating a Strategic Bitcoin Reserve, and with more institutional investors adding it to their portfolios, some commentators believe that Bitcoin will become a store of value over time. But this has yet to be tested.

What other possibilities do distributed-ledger technologies (DLTs) create? Leaving aside crypto assets, which will remain volatile tokens for speculative activities, three other options have emerged: central bank digital currencies (CBDCs), stablecoins, and tokenized deposits.

Fears that CBDCs would disintermediate banks or facilitate bank runs in times of financial panic have diminished now that limits are likely to be imposed on CBDC balances. In most cases, central banks will aim only to



“ New digital forms of money mostly run on centralized rather than decentralized ledgers, and they tend to be permissioned by authorized and trusted validators, rather than through permissionless and trustless transactions ”

provide a public safe asset for people's digital wallets, rather than an alternative to private-sector payment systems; and most CBDCs will not be 'programmable' or interest yielding.

That means private-sector solutions will continue to dominate payments. Fintech can offer cheap, safe, and efficient options that are not necessarily based on DLT; and now governments are offering real-time payment rails for banks and corporate firms that facilitate cheap and immediate settlement.

And even in the DLT domain, the tokenization of money-market funds or interest-bearing 'flatcoin' (pegged to a basket of assets) may drive adoption of new forms of quasi or broad money that can be seamlessly converted into digital monies that provide payment services.

But preferences differ markedly across jurisdictions. In the United States, the Trump administration's ideological opposition to CBDCs has led it to favor stablecoins (prompting warnings from the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) of a return to the shambolic free banking of the nineteenth century, only in a digital format). In Europe,

by contrast, worries about stablecoin risks—such as a new doom loop between the treasury and stablecoin issuers, and poor anti-money laundering and 'know your customer' practices—imply a preference for CBDCs and tokenized deposits. And in China, an aversion to potentially decentralized stablecoins has led the government to favor a CBDC, plus fintech payment solutions.

Ideally, each of these solutions would co-exist and play a different role within a well-organized system of digital currencies. A CBDC would be the public safe asset in people's digital wallets, providing a foundation of trust for the entire system. Stablecoins would then be used for domestic peer-to-peer or international payments, and tokenized deposits would be used for inter-bank transactions.

So far, one of the only jurisdictions that seems to have recognized the importance of implementing this 'pyramid' of digital currencies is the United Arab Emirates, which is creating the most welcoming environment for digital assets at the global level. In this context, it bears mentioning that while new digital forms of money are based on some

form of DLT, most run on centralized rather than decentralized ledgers, and they tend to be permissioned by authorized and trusted validators, rather than through permissionless and trustless transactions. Or put another way, they are closer to traditional centralized ledgers than to a true DLT.

Still, many of those tokenizing real-world assets do seem to be opting for DLT as the preferred 'unifying platform', with digital assets being denominated in native-digital currencies. Thus, rather than focusing on the race for dominance over domestic or cross-border payment systems, we suggest watching the geopolitics of digital currencies, given their potential to serve as global reserve assets.

Seeking a greater global role for the renminbi, in part to mitigate the risk of future US financial sanctions, China is pushing for its CBDC, the e-CNY, to be used in cross-border transactions among countries involved in China's Belt and Road Initiative (and its sister project, the Digital Silk Road). With m-Bridge, a technology originally designed with the BIS, the e-CNY could be used to bypass dollar channels and the SWIFT system for cross-border transactions; in fact, China already has its own alternative to SWIFT: CIPS (Cross-border Interbank Payment System).

These moves suggest that the eurozone could be squeezed between a still-dominant dollar (whose role would be boosted by the widespread adoption of dollar-pegged stablecoins) and a rising e-CNY. Europe is therefore moving fast to introduce a digital euro, which could help maintain the single currency's global reserve role and grant some 'strategic autonomy' to the European Union.

Finally, the Trump administration is pushing stablecoins (through the recent GENIUS Act) to preserve the dollar's dominant role in global payments and as a reserve currency. With dollar-based stablecoins now re-dollarizing the global economy, both China and the eurozone are re-considering their earlier skepticism and contemplating issuing their own stablecoins.

The future of money and payment systems will be characterized by evolution, not some radical crypto revolution. Network effects give current systems an incumbency advantage. Over a decade and a half after Bitcoin's launch, the main advance in crypto is the stablecoin, which is just a digital version of fiat currency; and even the adoption of stablecoins will be gradual. Money is too much a public good and too much a national-security concern to be left to private, anonymous, decentralized actors. One way or another, it will remain within the state's purview.

## Visit Qatar roadshow highlights Doha as a travel destination

Visit Qatar hosted a roadshow in Kuwait in partnership with Qatar Airways and Go Beyond to strengthen partnership with key travel stakeholders in Kuwait, facilitate B2B networking between destination management companies in Qatar and travel agencies in Kuwait.



The event, held on 24 September at the Four Seasons Hotel in Kuwait City, also encouraged tour operators in Kuwait to feature Qatar in their tour packages and itineraries. The event gathered more than 100 leading travel trade professionals and tour operators to discover Qatar's diverse tourism offerings, ranging from short-haul getaways and winter vacations to stopover experiences. Highlighting Qatar's growing leisure portfolio, the initiative reinforced the country's position as a leading regional tourism hub and supported the objectives of the Qatar National Tourism Strategy 2030, which seeks to enhance destination awareness, promote seasonal travel, and economic diversification through tourism.



EXCLUSIVE to THE TIMES KUWAIT

# A New Paradigm for Financing Education



**Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Jakaya Kikwete**

*Bola Ahmed Tinubu is President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.*

*Jakaya Kikwete, a former president of the United Republic of Tanzania, is Board Chairman of the Global Partnership for Education.*



Glancing at the news, one could easily conclude that our collective wish for a more peaceful, equal world is slipping out of reach. Ongoing conflicts, climate change, human displacement, and economic shocks do indeed paint a bleak picture. But we cannot afford to surrender to pessimism. To face these and other cross-border challenges head-on, we need everyone to play a part, including the more than 270 million children globally who are currently out of school.

Education fuels inclusive growth, builds resilience, and lays the foundation for peace and prosperity. It creates opportunities not only for one generation, but also for those that follow. That is why we, as current and former African heads of state, are co-hosting the Global Partnership for Education's 2026-30 financing campaign, which aims to mobilize US\$5 billion to provide a better education to 750 million children. We are joined in this effort by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who understands that education is central to both global development and security.

“

Lasting progress comes only when countries lead the process themselves.

This requires a shift in mindset. Education should be seen as a pillar of economic infrastructure, with resources directed toward programs to build skills at scale.

”

The GPE's ambitious campaign comes at a critical moment. Education systems are overstretched, underfunded, and under pressure – strained by conflict, extreme climate events, and economic instability. Lower-income countries face a \$100 billion annual gap to fund their schools, and 70 percent of ten-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries cannot read a simple text. The skills and ideas of today's children could change the world for the better, but only if we put education at the heart of our efforts to address global challenges.

We urge all world leaders to join us in meeting the GPE's ambitious \$5 billion target. Education financing must evolve to meet today's risks

and realities. Multiple crises are competing for limited resources in donor countries, while servicing public debt consumes a growing share of low-income countries' budgets. In fact, one out of every three lower-income countries spends more on debt servicing than on critical areas of human development such as education.

Sustainable education financing requires a fundamentally different approach, one that aligns diverse partners and funding sources behind a shared national goal. We need self-sustaining education systems that can deliver consistent quality for all children. Rather than fragmented short-term projects, we need coherent, long-term investment strategies led by governments and embedded in national budgets.

Too often, aid flows and private capital bypass public systems, distorting priorities and undermining institutional strength. For the best results, all financing, whether domestic, international, philanthropic, or private, must be channeled toward a single national strategy to transform education. Such investments strengthen systems rather than duplicate them, increasing the likelihood that reforms will be resilient and less donor-dependent.

Lasting progress comes only when countries lead the process themselves. But that requires a shift in mindset. Education should be seen as a pillar of economic infrastructure, with resources directed toward programs to build skills at scale. This, in turn, will ultimately increase earnings, expand the tax base, and drive stronger overall economic growth.

We urge governments everywhere to increase domestic financing and place education at the center of their national budgets and policies. Only by making education a top domestic priority can international support achieve lasting impact. This philosophy also drives the GPE's work. As both a financing mechanism and a convening platform, it helps partner countries define and finance their national education priorities by bringing together governments, donors, development banks, philanthropists, private investors, and civil society around a common reform agenda.

When countries organize their education systems around a unified strategy, every child has the chance to learn, and individual successes add up to a greater whole. Societies prosper as economies are reshaped from the ground up. Since 1980, education has accounted for half of global economic growth, 70 percent of income gains among the poorest one-fifth of humanity, and at least 40 percent of the reduction in extreme poverty.

These numbers prove that education is the best investment we can make to yield greater returns for everyone. Each additional year of

schooling increases salaries, broadens the tax base, and strengthens public budgets to fund the next cohort of learners. As local industries expand and government finances improve, the initial investment becomes an economic flywheel.

To usher in a world where educated citizens

drive progress and build resilient societies from within, we must channel all available resources – domestic and international, public and private – into country-owned systems. Only then can we ensure that children everywhere receive the education they need – not just this year, but every year.



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# Healthy habits found to significantly boost lifespan

Countries where per capita healthcare spending is high are usually seen as places where the general population enjoy better health outcomes and a longer lifespan. But, as a new study shows, higher spending alone does not translate to better health outcomes or an increased lifespan among the public.

For instance, data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Health Statistics database shows that in 2023 the US spending on per capita healthcare, at \$13,432, was the highest in the world. However, life expectancy among the US population of 79 years, was among the lowest for high-income countries. In contrast, Japan, which spent less than half the US amount on per capita healthcare (\$5,640), had a life expectancy of 84.6 years—among the highest in the world.

The new study emphasizes that, aside from effective healthcare spending, ensuring good health and increased lifespan necessitates availability of and accessibility to quality healthcare, as well as depends on income and education levels, living conditions, and, as the study premises, individual healthy habits.

The study on healthy habits and longevity, conducted by researchers from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in the United States, found that people who practiced a healthy lifestyle enjoyed a significant increase in their lifespan.

For their retrospective cohort study, the researchers analyzed data from two well-known earlier studies—the Nurses' Health Study (NHS) and the Health Professionals Follow-up Study (HPFS).

Both of the databases had a huge number of participants whose health habits were recorded over a very long period of time. The



NHS database included over 78,000 women, whose lifestyles were followed from 1980 to 2014, while the HPFS included over 40,000 men, whose health habits were followed from 1986 to 2014. The two studies together provided data on more than 120,000 participants, over a period of 34 years for women, and 28 years for men.

The researchers looked at data on five lifestyle choices of participants—their diet, physical activity, body weight, smoking, and alcohol consumption—as well as data on age, ethnicity, and medication use. The information had been gathered through questionnaires sent out regularly to the participants and validated over the long timeframes involved. The five health areas were chosen because prior studies had shown them to have a large impact on risk of premature death.

Criteria to identify healthy habits were defined and measured as:

- Healthy diet, which was based on the reported intake of healthy foods like vegetables, fruits, nuts, whole grains,

healthy fats, and omega-3 fatty acids, as well as consumption of unhealthy foods like red and processed meats, sugar-sweetened beverages, trans fat, and sodium.

- Healthy physical activity level was considered as being at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity daily.
- Healthy body weight was defined as a normal body mass index (BMI) between 18.5 and 24.9.
- Smoking, there was no healthy amount of smoking, instead, 'healthy' was considered as never having smoked.
- Alcohol intake was measured at a maximum of one drink for women, and two for men, with each drink being the equivalent of 14 g of pure alcohol.

Results from analysis of the data revealed that healthy habits make a big difference. The researchers found that people who met criteria for all five habits enjoyed significantly longer lives, provided they had begun practice of these habits

by age 50. In the case of women, it was 14 years of additional lifespan, and for men it was 12 more years, when compared to people who had no such healthy habits. People who had none of these habits were far more likely to die prematurely from cancer or cardiovascular disease.

Study investigators also calculated life expectancy against the number of healthy habits people had out of the total five. They found that just one healthy habit—it did not matter which habit—extended life expectancy by two years in men and women. Not surprisingly, the more healthy habits people had, the longer their lifespan was found to be. The new research adds to the body of evidence from previous studies, which had postulated that people 50 and older who were normal weight, had never smoked, and drank alcohol in moderation lived on average seven years longer.

Another mega-analysis of 15 international studies that included over 500,000 participants had found that over half of premature deaths among study participants were due to unhealthy lifestyle factors such as poor diet, inactivity, obesity, excessive alcohol intake, and smoking.

Experts have suggested that the best way to help people make healthy diet and lifestyle change, is at the large-scale, population level, through public health guidelines and policy changes, similar to legislations on use of seat belts for automobiles and helmets for motorcycles.

The study's findings have, understandably, faced significant pushback from multinational companies, as legislation and guidelines that help people live healthier longer lives impact the profits of firms selling fast foods, soft drinks, alcoholic beverages, and of course, big tobacco, who have been making money at the cost of human lives.

## Impact of coffee on sleep, brain rejuvenation

Caffeine, a chemical substance that stimulates the central nervous system, found in coffee, tea, chocolate, energy drinks and many soft drinks, is one of the most widely consumed psychoactive substances in the world. The stimulant, known for its eugeroic (wakefulness-inducing), ergogenic (performance-enhancing), and nootropic (cognitive-boosting) properties, has been shown to be harmful when taken in excess.

A team of researchers from Université de Montréal in Canada have now shed new light on how caffeine can modify sleep and influence the brain's physical and cognitive recovery overnight.

Using artificial intelligence (AI) and electroencephalography (EEG) the scientists studied the effect of caffeine on sleep and its impact on the brain. The study results showed, for the very first time, that caffeine increases the complexity of brain signals and enhances brain 'criticality' during sleep. Interestingly, this was

more pronounced in younger adults.

Criticality describes a state of the brain that is balanced between order and chaos, explained the researchers, adding: "It's like an orchestra: too quiet and nothing happens, too chaotic and there's cacophony. Criticality is the happy medium where brain activity is both organized and flexible. In this state, the brain functions optimally: it can process information efficiently, adapt quickly, learn and make decisions with agility."

In other words, caffeine stimulates the brain and pushes it into a state of criticality, where it is more awake, alert and reactive. While this is useful during the day for concentration, this state could interfere with rest at night, with the brain neither relaxing nor recovering properly.

To study how caffeine affects the sleeping brain, the team recorded the nocturnal brain activity of 40 healthy adults using an electroencephalogram. They compared each participant's brain activity on two separate nights—one when they consumed caffeine capsules three hours and then one hour before bedtime, and another when they took a placebo at the same times.

The scientists then used advanced statistical analysis and artificial intelligence to identify subtle changes in neuronal activity. The results showed that caffeine increased the complexity of brain signals, reflecting more dynamic and less



predictable neuronal activity, especially during the non-rapid eye movement (NREM) phase of sleep, which is crucial for memory consolidation and cognitive recovery.

The researchers also discovered substantial changes in the brain's electrical rhythms during sleep: caffeine attenuated slower oscillations, generally associated with deep, restorative sleep, and stimulated other oscillation patterns, which are more common during wakefulness and mental engagement.

These changes suggest that even during sleep, the brain remains in a more activated, less restorative state under the influence of caffeine. The change in the brain's rhythmic activity could

explain why caffeine affects the efficiency with which the brain recovers during the night, with potential consequences for memory processing.

The study also showed that the effects of caffeine on brain dynamics were significantly more pronounced in young adults between ages 20 and 27 compared to middle-aged participants aged 41 to 58, especially during REM sleep, the phase associated with dreaming.

The scientists postulated that the difference in response has been attributed to the higher density of adenosine receptors in the brains of young adults. Adenosine is a molecule that gradually accumulates in the brain throughout the day, causing a feeling of fatigue. Adenosine receptors naturally decrease with age, reducing caffeine's ability to block them and improve brain complexity, which may partly explain the reduced effect of caffeine observed in middle-aged participants.

Considering caffeine's widespread use around the world, especially as a daily remedy for fatigue, the researchers stress the importance of understanding its complex effects on brain activity across different age groups and health conditions.

They added that further research was needed to clarify how these neural changes affect cognitive health and daily functioning, and to potentially guide personalized recommendations for caffeine intake.



# Back-to-School Season, a Period of Illnesses for Children

*To better understand the health risks to children from their daily interactions in school, and to learn what are some of the preventive measures that students, teachers, and parents can cultivate to promote good health and hygiene, we spoke to the World Health Organization (WHO) representative in Kuwait, Dr. Assad Hafeez.*

## The Times Kuwait Report

Back-to-school season is a time marked by a dramatic increase in many illnesses among children such as influenza (flu), the common cold, strep throat, diarrhea, and conjunctivitis. The main reason for children to catch illnesses at school is their close proximity with other students in the classroom, and the potential for germs to spread quickly through the school environment.

To better understand the health risks to children from their daily interactions in school, and to learn what are some of the preventive measures that students, teachers, and parents can cultivate to promote good health and hygiene, we spoke to the World Health Organization (WHO) representative in Kuwait, Dr. Assad Hafeez.

During the interview, Dr. Hafeez highlighted the importance of personal hygiene among students to prevent the spread of germs, and the critical role that teachers and parents play in ensuring that children stay healthy while at school and at home.

### What are the most common infectious diseases that tend to increase during the back-to-school season?

"When schools reopen, it's almost as if the germs head back to class too. The most common illnesses we see are colds, flu,

everyday interactions—coughing, sneezing, or touching surfaces with unwashed hands and then touching the face. Even sharing simple items like a water bottle or borrowing a pencil can be enough to pass germs along.

"Children are naturally social, and while that closeness is a wonderful part of growing up, it also gives viruses an easy way to travel. Unfortunately, when kids bring these germs home, they can unintentionally spread them to more vulnerable family members, such as grandparents or those with weakened immune systems."

### What early warning signs should parents and teachers look out for?

"I always say: trust your instincts. If a child seems more tired than usual, has a fever, a persistent cough, or keeps complaining of a sore throat or stomach pain, those are red flags. "It's best to keep them home early rather than risk the illness getting worse—or spreading to the whole class. Schools should also have a clear plan for separating sick students from healthy ones without causing stigma, and for notifying parents or health care providers when needed."

### What role can students themselves play in prevention and protecting their classmates?

"Children love being health heroes, and with the right guidance, they can play a big role in keeping their schools and families safe.

your hands before lunch!', can make them feel responsible and proud of their efforts.

"Handwashing alone has a powerful impact—it can prevent up to 30 percent of diarrheal diseases and 20 percent of respiratory infections.

"Children should also be taught kindness and empathy. They need to understand that illness can affect anyone, and no one should ever be teased or stigmatized for being sick. After all, germs don't discriminate, and a little compassion goes a long way in building a supportive school environment."

### How can schools strengthen a safe and healthy learning environment?

"A safe and healthy school begins with the basics: clean classrooms, good ventilation, and soap and water that are always within easy reach. These simple measures create a foundation where children can thrive, learn, and grow in a safe environment.

"Teachers play an essential role in this effort. Often, they are the first to notice when a child isn't feeling well. By empowering teachers to take quick action—such as encouraging a child to rest or seeking further care—schools can stop illnesses from spreading before they affect entire classes.

"Health shouldn't feel like a chore. In fact, it can be woven into daily routines in fun and engaging ways. Simple group activities, like students washing their hands together before meals or snacks, help build lasting healthy habits. For schools looking for more ideas, the WHO has guidelines on how better water, sanitation, and hygiene can boost both health and learning.

"To keep schools safe, a few simple practices can go a long way. Students should be encouraged to bring reusable water bottles and avoid sharing cups or glasses. They should be taught to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after touching high-contact surfaces like doorknobs, desks, or bus railings."

"Equally important is the regular cleaning and disinfection of school facilities. Toilets, taps, and drinking stations should be cleaned daily, first with detergent to remove dirt, and then with disinfectants—using a 0.1 percent chlorine solution for surfaces or 70 percent ethyl alcohol for frequently touched objects."

### What about attendance policies?

"Schools should have flexible attendance and sick leave policies so students and staff don't feel pressured to come in when unwell. Perfect attendance awards can unintentionally encourage the opposite behavior and should be avoided.

If a school closes temporarily or a child is home sick, learning can continue through online lessons, home assignments, or even TV and podcasts to keep kids engaged."

### Are there tips for different age groups?

"Health lessons work best when they're fun and age-appropriate, tailored to the way children learn at different stages of their education.

"For preschoolers, playful learning is key. Singing songs while washing hands is a great way to make the 20-second rule memorable and fun. In primary school, teachers can demonstrate how germs spread with a simple activity: spraying colored water on a piece of paper to show just how far droplets



can travel. This hands-on visual makes the invisible world of germs real and relatable. As children move into lower secondary school, they can take a more active role by creating posters to raise awareness among their peers. This not deepens their understanding and also builds leadership skills.

"For upper secondary students, lessons can be more advanced and reflective. Classes can explore the history of pandemics and examine how public policies have shaped health responses, fostering discussions about responsibility, and social cohesion."

### What are some practical tips for parents (vaccinations, personal hygiene, nutrition, sufficient sleep)?

"The first and most important line of defense in keeping children healthy is vaccination. Vaccines protect against diseases that can be far more serious than the common cold, creating a shield of protection for the child and wider community. Parents are strongly encouraged to follow the national immunization schedule in close coordination with schools and primary health care providers, ensuring that their children receive all recommended vaccines as outlined by the National Immunization Programme.

"Beyond vaccinations, there are simple daily habits that make a world of difference. Regular handwashing is one of the most effective ways to stop germs in their tracks. Parents should also focus on providing a balanced diet packed with fruits, vegetables, and proteins to strengthen their child's immune system.

"Sleep matters too. A well-rested child is a healthier, more resilient child. Fatigue can weaken the body's defenses, making it easier for illnesses to take hold. Just as importantly, children tend to imitate what they see. When parents consistently practice good hygiene and healthy behaviors at home, children are much more likely to do the same at school.

"Illness can also be emotionally challenging, especially during stressful times like exam season. Maintaining regular routines—like consistent bedtimes and mealtimes—can help children feel secure. It's equally important to create space for play and relaxation, which reduces anxiety and supports emotional well-being."



**"A safe and healthy school begins with the basics: clean classrooms, good ventilation, and soap and water that are always within easy reach. These simple measures create a foundation where children can thrive, learn, and grow in a safe environment."**

COVID-19, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), hand, foot, and mouth disease (especially among younger children) and acute watery diarrhea. "While none of these are unusual, the close contact and shared spaces in schools mean these illnesses can spread quickly, making it important to encourage good hygiene and early care to keep children healthy."

### How do these diseases typically spread?

"Most of these illnesses spread through

Even the simplest habits can make a huge difference. Teaching kids to wash their hands before eating and after using the toilet, use hand sanitizer when soap and water aren't available, and cough or sneeze into their elbows instead of their hands helps stop germs from spreading.

It's also important to encourage children not to share personal items like water bottles or utensils. Even a small gesture, like reminding a friend, 'Hey, don't forget to wash

# Davos for Diplomats

**EXCLUSIVE to**  
**THE TIMES KUWAIT**

**Richard Haass**

*President Emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations, is a senior counselor at Centerview Partners, Distinguished University Scholar at New York University, and the author of the weekly Substack newsletter Home & Away*

**F**ive years ago, I wrote a commentary about the United Nations as it turned 75. The title, 'The UN's Unhappy Birthday', said it all. The UN is now 80, but my critique back then remains all too valid today. The UN's slide into near-irrelevance continues unabated.

The annual September gathering of world leaders in New York, which has just ended, is less important for what the UN does (which is little in the realm of preventing or ending wars) than for what it provides, namely a venue for all sorts of bilateral and multilateral meetings among the high-level visitors. Think of it as Davos for diplomats.

But the UN itself is a victim of chronic malaise, owing above all to the resurgence of great-power rivalry. The state of international affairs today is a far cry from what it was in 1990 when the world came together through the UN in the aftermath of Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

Back then, the Soviet Union and China worked with the United States; today, Russia and China prevent the UN from playing a role in ending the war in Ukraine, in which Russia is both the protagonist and the cause. Major divisions within the UN Security Council prevent the organization from constructively addressing most major issues, from North Korea's expanding nuclear arsenal and Iran's



nuclear ambitions to the war in Gaza and other conflicts around the world.

The UN has failed to evolve. I doubt anyone would design the Security Council, the most important UN organ, in a way that resembles its current iteration. Yes, most would agree that China and the US should retain their veto-wielding permanent seats. But some might question why Russia, with an economy smaller than that of Brazil or Canada, and which acts in ways inconsistent with the UN charter, deserves one.

Many would also challenge the case for continuing to include the United Kingdom and France. And there would be advocates for Japan, Germany (or the European Union), India, and several others. All that said, any change would be opposed by at least one of the five current permanent members, which is why no meaningful change is ever likely to materialize.

Beyond the Security Council, the organization rarely does itself any favors. It

puts countries that are abusers of human rights on bodies meant to protect them. It failed to stand up to China when the Chinese government refused to cooperate and allow a serious investigation into the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. And the organization's bureaucracy too often runs on the basis of a global spoils system rather than merit. Accountability is rare.

And now the US, the driving force behind the UN's creation, its host and biggest funder throughout its existence, has distanced itself from the organization. Under President Donald Trump, the US no longer supports multilateral efforts to deal with issues ranging from global health and trade to climate change and human rights – and indeed questions the value of the very international order it did so much to build.

The Middle East is a special case of UN shortcomings. There is a long-term bias against Israel, one that far predates Israeli actions in

Gaza and limits the UN's ability to play a central role in efforts to resolve Middle East conflicts. Events this past week did not help matters, as several countries, including France, the UK, Canada, and Australia, chose to use the annual UN opening as an opportunity to recognize a Palestinian state.

Behind this move is deep and understandable frustration with what Israel is doing in Gaza and the West Bank, with their own inability to influence Israeli actions, and with what is seen as US passivity and unwillingness to rein in Israel. Hence, the recognition of Palestine is the best (or least) these governments felt they could do.

But understandable does not necessarily mean wise. One problem is that the decision to recognize a Palestinian state is just a rhetorical shift; it does nothing to improve the prospect of ending the war in Gaza or actually creating a viable Palestinian state.

Trump's rambling address to the UN was not well received, owing to his attacks on Europe over immigration and his denial of climate change. But some of his other criticisms of the organization were well-founded. He was not wrong when he said, "It has such tremendous, tremendous potential, but it's not even coming close to living up to that potential. For the most part, at least for now, all they seem to do is write a really strongly worded letter and then never follow that letter up."

Until the UN is prepared to do more, it will continue to be sidelined, and the gap between the world's challenges and its capacity to meet them is likely to widen. I concluded my commentary five years ago with the following words: "The case for multilateralism and global governance is stronger than ever. But, for better or worse, it will have to take place largely outside the UN." Unfortunately, I see no reason to revise that conclusion now.



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