Co-Chairs’ Statement
23rd GCC-EU Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting
Manama - 30 June 2013

1. The 23rd session of the Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) and the European Union (EU) was held in Manama, capital of the Kingdom of Bahrain, on 30 June 2013. The GCC delegation was headed by H.E. Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohamed Al Khalifa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the EU delegation was headed by H.E. Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission. The GCC Secretariat was represented by H.E. Dr. Abdul Latif bin Rashed Al-Zayani, GCC Secretary General.

2. The Ministers reviewed the current state of GCC-EU relations, and underlined the importance of further strengthening these ties, to serve as a solid and effective foundation for regional security and stability. Both sides also welcomed progress on the political dialogue between the two sides. The Ministers endorsed the minutes of the latest Joint Cooperation Committee held in Brussels on 24 April, 2013, and expressed their satisfaction at the outcomes of the Joint Action Programme (JAP) 2010-2013.

3. Both parties outlined the steps and procedures adopted by the EU to enhance
economic growth in the eurozone, to overcome the effects of the financial crisis, and to support and encourage the protection of mutual investments, which will facilitate the development of economic cooperation between them.

4. The Ministers congratulated H.H. Shaikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani on his accession to the throne in the State of Qatar, wishing him every success in achieving further progress and prosperity for the Qatari people, and expressing appreciation to the Emir Father H.H. Shaikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani for the achievements and progress during his reign.

5. The Ministers welcomed the ongoing cooperation between Kuwait and Iraq. They also expressed the importance of maintaining the security, stability and territorial integrity of Iraq.

6. The two sides called on Iran to play a constructive role in the region, based on respect for the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference.

7. The Ministers reiterated their concern at the lack of progress towards resolving the dispute between the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran over the three islands of Abu Musa, Lesser Tunb and Greater Tunb. They reiterated their support for a peaceful settlement of this dispute in accordance with international law, either through direct negotiations between the parties or by referring the matter to the International Court of Justice.

8. The Ministers expressed support for the ongoing diplomatic efforts of the EU High Representative, together with the E3+3, to seek a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, and called on Iran to fully comply with the relevant UNSC and IAEA Board of Governors resolutions regarding the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy.
9. In light of the concerns about the safety of the Bushehr Reactor and its potential impact on the region, the Ministers referred to the need for Iran to comply with international safety norms and standards.

10. The Ministers underlined the importance of a unified international stance to reach a comprehensive political solution to put an end to the Syrian crisis, stop the bloodshed of the Syrian people, achieve their legitimate aspirations, safeguard Syria's security and unity, and avoid serious implications for the whole region. They reiterated the utmost urgency of finding a political settlement of the Syrian conflict and called on all actors to contribute constructively to this objective. In that context, they pledged that they will spare no effort in helping to create the appropriate conditions for a successful convening of the peace conference on Syria. The Ministers also condemned the participation of Hezbollah and other foreign forces in military operations in Syria. The Ministers further expressed concern at the acute humanitarian needs in Syria and the wider region, and urged the international community to make additional commitments to allow for the free access of humanitarian aid, assistance and protection inside Syria and for Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries.

11. The Ministers reaffirmed their shared position that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East is vital for international peace and security, noting that such a solution must be based on UN Resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, leading to the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian State on the territory occupied since 1967. The Ministers also welcomed the current efforts of US Secretary of State John Kerry to reinvigorate the Middle East Peace Process.

The Ministers reaffirmed their position not to recognize any changes to the pre-
1967 borders other than those agreed by both parties including with regard to Jerusalem. They stressed their common position that Israeli settlements anywhere in the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal under international law and constitute an obstacle to peace. In this regard, they called on Israel to immediately end all settlement activity in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, including natural growth, and to dismantle all outposts. The Ministers agreed on the need to continue to support Palestinian state-building efforts, both politically and financially.

12. The Ministers expressed their full support for the GCC initiative on Yemen, and the Yemeni National Dialogue, and expressed their support to Yemen's President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi in leading Yemen through this critical period in order to achieve the aspirations of the Yemeni people and in countering radical groups.

13. The Ministers reiterated their condemnation of terrorism in all its forms, and underlined the importance of international counter-terrorism cooperation.

14. The Ministers expressed their gratitude to His Majesty the King, the Government and people of the Kingdom of Bahrain for their warm welcome and hospitality, and have agreed to hold the 24th meeting of the Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting in the European Union in 2014.