



## PRESS STATEMENT

BY THE AMBASSADOR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO THE STATE OF KUWAIT

As Kuwait and the EU emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, the outlook on the future of our bilateral relations is excellent in all fields: political, economic, social and cultural. In just ten days from now, we will mark the first anniversary of the establishment, on 14 July 2019, of a fully-fledged EU Delegation in Kuwait. On that occasion, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait joined the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in jointly inaugurating the Delegation offices at the Al Hamra tower. By opening an EU Delegation to Kuwait, the EU increased its footprint in the Gulf, enabling us to deepen further our engagement both with Kuwait and with other the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Contacts at high-level between the EU and Kuwait continue, just last week – one day before the 4th Brussels Conference on Syria - an important phone call took place between the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy H.E. Mr. Josep Borrell and his Kuwaiti counterpart, H.E. Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Muhammad Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The EU considers the State of Kuwait as an increasingly important partner and our ambition is to have a comprehensive and multi-dimensional cooperation covering political dialogue, economy and trade, sectoral and regional cooperation. The relations between the EU and Kuwait have been historically strong. Kuwait has played a key role in promoting region-to-region engagement between the EU and the GCC under the framework of the 1988 EU-GCC Cooperation Agreement. More recently, our bilateral relations have experienced a major impetus. Kuwait was the first country in the Gulf to sign a Cooperation Arrangement with the European External Action Service (EEAS) in July 2016 that provides a platform for regular political consultations covering common regional challenges in the Middle East and beyond. The second EU-Kuwait meeting of Senior Officials on the implementation of the Cooperation Arrangement is set to take place on 16 July 2020 under the joint leadership of Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs H.E. Ambassador Walid Al Khobaizi and the Managing Director for Middle East and North Africa of the EEAS H.E. Mr. Fernando Gentilini. This meeting will be held via video-teleconference taking account of the continuation of COVID-19 related travel restrictions and social distancing measures.

EU-Kuwait relations are by no means limited to official government-level engagement and are deepened and enriched further by people-to-people exchanges, business-to-business dialogue, education and parliamentary exchanges as well as cultural diplomacy. The visit of a delegation from the European Parliament to Kuwait in December 2018 was hosted by the National Assembly and will, we expect, be reciprocated as soon as conditions permit with a return visit to Brussels by Kuwaiti parliamentarians. The full resumption of contacts at all levels will of course depend on how well we manage to contain the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in the EU and in Kuwait, as re-opening our borders will very much depend on the success of these efforts. After several very difficult weeks when the WHO designated Europe as the epicenter of the crisis, the EU has by now as a whole finally managed to “flatten the curve” and our Member States are now carefully and gradually re-opening their economies and our borders – internal and external.

The EU Member States agreed on 30 June to issue a recommendation for a partial and gradual lifting as from 1 July of the temporary restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU+



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Schengen (all EU Member States with the exception of Ireland plus the four non-EU Schengen Member States) that have been in force since mid-March 2020. This recommendation features a list of just 14 countries whose residents will be permitted to enter for 'non-essential' travel. The main criteria for determining the list is public health: residents of those countries that have a similar or lower rate of infection as the EU average over the last 14-day period and in which the trend of new cases over a 14-day period is stable or decreasing were considered for inclusion. A second criterion during this first phase of the re-opening is reciprocity – that is, does the country in question already now or will soon allow EU nationals to enter for non-essential travel?

While it is true that neither Kuwait nor any of the GCC members were included in this first list, it is important to understand that the list will be reviewed every two weeks so that changes in the epidemiological situation (based on data provided by the EU Centre for Disease Control and the World Health Organisation, complemented by qualitative information provided by EU Delegations in third countries) can be taken into account for the purpose of updating the list. Countries will be added whose epidemiological situation has improved and countries can be removed whose situation has deteriorated. Therefore, this is a first list and not a last list.

It is also very important to understand that the temporary restrictions introduced for non-essential travel already since mid-March - and that remain in force until further notice for the vast majority of countries - were neither intended nor implemented as a blanket ban. EU citizens and their family members as well as long-term EU residents and their family members are exempted as are a long list of travellers with an essential function or need. These travellers can be: healthcare professionals, frontier workers, seasonal workers in agriculture, transport personnel, diplomats and staff of international organisations, passengers in transit, passengers travelling for imperative family reasons, seafarers, persons in need of international protection or for other humanitarian reasons, third-country nationals travelling for the purpose of study and highly-qualified third-country workers if their employment is necessary from an economic perspective and the work cannot be postponed or performed abroad.

Visitors from Kuwait are indeed highly valued in Europe. Considering the great economic importance of tourism to many of our EU Member States, the decision to begin lifting the temporary travel restrictions to the EU in a phased and gradual manner following strict public health criteria was not taken easily. As the Ambassador of the EU to Kuwait, allow me to state with full sincerity that I look very much forward to the inclusion of Kuwait on the list as soon as the public health criteria are met.

The pandemic is a global challenge. I would like to use this opportunity to commend Kuwait's response to it. I believe Kuwait responded firmly to the situation and began swiftly to take measures to protect the health and safety of people living in the country. The EU Delegation to Kuwait takes note of the positive daily recovery cases. It is important for all of us to continue to abide by the health authorities' directives. The EU Delegation to Kuwait would like to express gratitude to all MoH staff, front liners and volunteers that are supporting Kuwait's response to the pandemic.

**Dr. Cristian Tudor**  
**Ambassador of the European Union to the State of Kuwait**

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***About the Delegation of the European Union:***

The Delegation of the European Union to the State of Kuwait was inaugurated on 14 July 2019 to deepen its engagement with Kuwait and other countries in the GCC, aiming to have a comprehensive and multi-dimensional co-operation covering political dialogue, economy and trade, sectoral and regional co-operation. The EU Delegation in Kuwait is also responsible for EU's relations with Qatar. It is the third EU Delegation in the Gulf region, after Riyadh and Abu Dhabi.

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