

ABDULAZIZ SAUD AL-BABTAIN CULTURAL FOUNDATION

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

Amir of the State of Kuwait, Humanitarian Leader

Abdullah Yaccoub Bishara
Amer Dhiab Al-Tamimi
Mahmoud Mohammed Harbi

With a foreword by
Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain

Kuwait
2015

ABDULAZIZ SAUD AL-BABTAIN CULTURAL FOUNDATION

Translated by
Omnia Nouh

Translation reviewed by
Andy Smart

Layout and design
The General Secretariat of the Foundation

All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purpose of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recoding or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Tel.: + 965 22430514
Fax : + 965 22455039
E-mail: kw@albabtainprize.org

Contents

- Foreword 7

Chapter One

- The Amir as a Humanitarian Leader: *Abdullah Yaccoub Bishara* 11
- Diplomatic mediation and conflict resolution 19
- The Gulf and the South 21
- Britain's withdrawal and the United Arab Emirates 22
- A council for Gulf Arab cooperation 23
- The Palestinian cause 24
- Events in Lebanon 26
- The Iran–Iraq War 26
- The Islamic dimension 27
- Development in Asia 29
- Kuwait and Africa 30
- Kuwait and non-alignment 31
- Kuwait and the United Nations 32

Chapter Two

- Kuwait … Humanitarian Action and Development Aid: *Amer Dhiab Al-Tamimi* 37

- The philosophy of development aid 40

- Kuwait and its humanitarian responsibilities 45

- Zakat House and charitable support 50

- The International Islamic Charity Organization 51

- The Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation and other institutions 52

- The Kuwait Red Crescent Society 52

- Kuwait's humanitarian aid mechanisms 53

- Implementation mechanisms 55

- The implications of Kuwaiti aid for developing countries 56

- Kuwait's position on the scale of international aid 59

- Monitoring and implementation of finances 61

- The importance of integrating a philosophy of aid into Kuwaiti society 61

- Conclusion 66

Chapter Three

- Kuwait's Contribution to the Promotion of Culture in the Arab World: *Mohammed Mahmoud Harbi* 69
- Soft power 71
- Partnership 72
- Responsibilities 73
- Civil activity 74
- Social affairs and the media 75
- Kuwait's cultural mission 76
- Sabah Al-Ahmad and Al-Arabi magazine 79
- The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) 81
- Stimulating cultural life 82
- A comprehensive plan for Arab culture 83
- The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) 84
- The scientific dimension of international cooperation 88
- KFAS publications 89
- Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah (DAI) 89
- 'Treasury of the World' 91
- Private institutional patronage 91
- Foundation of Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain's Prize for Poetic Creativity 92
- Souad Al-Sabah Publishing and Distribution House 93
- References 95

Foreword

Kuwaitis are an inherently charitable people who are always ready to lend a helping hand to poverty- and disaster-stricken people throughout the world. In spite of the arid environment, scarce resources and poor economic conditions of our early history, official records around the world demonstrate ample evidence of this innate benevolence ever since Kuwaitis first appeared on this good land.

When the United Nations recently designated 19 August as World Humanitarian Day, it could find no better than the State of Kuwait and no-one more deserving of this distinguished honor than His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah – may God protect him. The Amir was named as a '**Humanitarian Leader**' in recognition of his great contributions to and continued support of UN-led humanitarian relief operations, for which he has provided direct assistance and hosted pledging conferences to help refugees and disaster-stricken populations.

The United Nations also honored the State of Kuwait as a '**Global Humanitarian Center**' based on formal UN records of the substantial humanitarian assistance offered by a country which may be small in area, but large in the integrity, honor and unlimited giving of its people. On 9 September 2014, UN Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-Moon held a major celebration in honor of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of his designation as '**Humanitarian Leader**'.

The Secretary-General, in his address, extended his thanks to Kuwait and its Amir and expressed his pride at honoring the Amir in recognition of his continued support of humanitarian action and efforts to alleviate the pain and agony of the needy throughout the world.

His Highness the Amir, in turn, thanked the Secretary-General and all those responsible at the global organization, for this kind gesture and generous initiative, which he considered a tribute to all the people of Kuwait. The Amir underlined that the history of Kuwait's philanthropy could be traced back to time immemorial and that acts of benevolence and philanthropy are inherent values in the hearts of all Kuwaitis. He also maintained that Kuwait's humanitarian actions have never been driven by self-interest or personal agendas.

We Kuwaitis believe that this UN honoring of His Highness the Amir reflects the great status that he occupies in the eyes of world leaders and international bodies. We also believe that this title is well-deserved, given his worldwide philanthropic profile and his unlimited support of charities and voluntary associations that provide assistance to the needy without obstruction or delay.

On this precious occasion, which is dear to the hearts of all Kuwaitis, we at the Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation take great pleasure in celebrating His Highness the Amir at the Foundation's fifteenth session to be held in cooperation with Oxford University, on 24-25 October 2015. We are particularly pleased to publish this book, ***Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah: Amir of the State of Kuwait, Humanitarian Leader***, in Arabic, English and French, for distribution to hundreds of invitees to the session as well as to the embassies of Kuwait around the world.

The Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation would also like to express its deepest gratitude to Messrs. Abdullah Yaccoub Bishara, Amer Dhiab Al-Tamimi and Mahmoud Mohammed Harbi for their valuable contributions to this book. Throughout their chapters, they have shed light on the Amir's tireless and multifaceted humanitarian work, in which he has sought God's satisfaction and aspired to hold the flag of Kuwait high.

God knows the intentions of all hearts.

Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain

Kuwait

13 Rajab 1436 / 2 May 2015

Chapter I

The Amir as a Humanitarian Leader

The Amir as a Humanitarian Leader

Abdullah Yaccoub Bishara[*]

On 9 September 2014, Mr Ban Ki-Moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, held a celebration to honor His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait, as a '**humanitarian leader**' in recognition of his contributions and continued support for UN-led operations to save lives and alleviate suffering around the globe. The ceremony was attended by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Sabah, senior Kuwaiti statesmen and high-profile UN officials.

On this unique occasion, the Secretary-General delivered a speech in which he explained the reason for awarding such an honor, most notably that the State of Kuwait has demonstrated exceptional generosity under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber

(*) Abdullah Yaccoub Bishara studied international law at Oxford University and earned a master's degree in political science from St. John's University in New York, USA. He served as director of the office of the minister of foreign affairs (1964–71), Kuwait's permanent representative to the United Nations (1971–81), Kuwait's representative at the Security Council (1978–79), President of the Security Council (February 1979), Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (1981–93), General Coordinator for the British–Kuwaiti Friendship Society and President of the Diplomatic Centre for Strategic Studies. In April 1997, Bishara retired from civil service and engaged in writing, publishing and lecturing. He received numerous honours from all GCC countries, Egypt, Lebanon and other countries. He authored several books including *Two Years at the Security Council* (1981), *Abdullah Bishara among Kings, Sheikhs and Sultans* (2004) and *Kuwait's Diplomatic Wars* (1961–63).

Al-Sabah. The Secretary-General noted that 'in response to death and chaos, we have seen remarkable acts of human kindness and generosity' by Syria's neighbors, through a regional campaign led by the Amir and people of Kuwait.

He added that Kuwait, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir, has shown exemplary generosity and proved that its heart is bigger than any crisis, poverty or epidemic. The pledging conferences that have been held in Kuwait in order to assist the Syrian people have helped raise millions of dollars to support the needy, not only in Syria and Iraq, but also in other regions and countries in Africa and Asia. '*Kuwait may be small in size but it has a great and compassionate heart*!' the Secretary-General said. He further noted that the efforts and initiatives led by the Amir and State of Kuwait have galvanized the international community to provide more assistance and have enabled the United Nations to carry out its humanitarian mission.

The UN chief expressed his deep pride in awarding the honorary title to His Highness the Amir in recognition of his ongoing support, outstanding leadership of humanitarian action and great efforts to alleviate the suffering of nations throughout the world.

In response to the Secretary-General's words of praise, the Amir delivered a speech in which he placed much emphasis on the fact that Kuwait, since its independence and gaining the UN membership, has followed a steady approach in its foreign policy, based essentially on humanitarian assistance to all needy nations, regardless of their geographic locations, religious beliefs or ethnic origins. The Amir further explained that this assistance was in 'pursuance of Kuwait's belief and conviction of the importance of international partnership, as well as the unification and activation of international efforts, aimed at the maintenance and preservation of the foundations of life – that is, the human spirit.'

With those few words, His Highness the Amir expressed the firm political–humanitarian basis of Kuwait's diplomacy and philosophy regarding inter-state relations at the Gulf, Arab and international levels.

The Amir showed his clear awareness of Kuwait's general conditions which posed serious challenges to its national security at the political, economic, social and psychological levels, in three main ways:

- Its geographical location amidst three countries that are larger in terms of resources, population and area, and the consequent geographical risks;
- Its area and population, which made it impossible to develop adequate mechanisms of deterrence;
- Arab diplomatic confusion and fragmentation into ideological and political strife.

Given this stark reality, and to overcome border concerns, the Amir has pursued a diplomacy aimed at establishing an Arab–Islamic diplomatic deterrent that is moral, institutional and conciliatory. This deterrent-seeking diplomacy has followed the following paths:

- Resolving crises and unresolved issues between and among Arab states, and removing the obstacles that hinder understanding and cause tensions;
- Devising an Arab policy that is approved – in its content – by all Arab states; one that is committed to the principles of the Arab League, respects the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, and is based on mutual trust, confidence, common interests and common destiny;

- Non-engagement in global polarizations and avoiding involvement in spheres of influence or blocs of interest formerly sought by the Warsaw Pact and NATO, and maintaining stable international relations according to the norms of international conduct;
- Partnership in development within the Arab League and Islamic countries, and among developing countries.

Naturally, these paths have led to heavy responsibilities, not only politically and financially. In fact, Kuwait has had to play a more proactive diplomatic role and reach out to every Arab capital in order to overcome Arab differences.

The Amir has managed this strenuous task in a masterful way, seeking to secure an Arab deterrent to maintain Kuwait's integrity in a turbulent Arab world.

To this end, Kuwait's diplomacy, through practice, has become associated with a credibility accrued through continued philanthropy and chivalry, which has never become tainted with hidden self-interests.

With reference to the charitable and inclusive approach that has become synonymous with Kuwait, we should recall with delight its shining contributions to inter-Arab relations. In addition to financial support, Kuwait has spared no effort in order to help Arab countries. A case in point was the military support offered to Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Palestine during the wars, and its actions to support the Algerian Liberation Front in the 1950s and 1960s, when it imposed taxes on cinema performances to secure continued assistance to the Algerian people's struggle for independence and their liberation from French colonialism.

This brings to mind the role of the semi-permanent aid committee founded by a group of Kuwaiti traders who were driven by sincere Arab patriotism, pride and sense of selfless contribution that sought only the joy of giving and sharing.

That was before Kuwait's independence and the establishment of State agencies and institutions. With the declaration of the independence on 19 June 1961, the young State inherited a legacy of philanthropy and spontaneous generosity and a wealth of experience in the art of communication.

Upon submitting a membership application to join the Arab League, Kuwait discovered that its request entailed certain political intricacies and calculations of gains and losses. However, its perseverance, coupled with noble intentions and a determination to continue to contribute to various development programs in the Arab states, along with its determination and credibility, enabled Kuwait to overcome political compromises.

Independence led to the emergence of pioneering development institutions that operated through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development. Established on 31 December 1961, KFAED became an active and influential contributor to various priority programs developed by Arab states for the people of its beneficiary countries.

With the expansion in Kuwait's development contributions and with accumulating experience, KFAED grew into a global fund catering to requests made by various developing countries, including ocean islands, Central Africa and Latin America.

The only criterion that the Fund followed was how serious the proposed project was and how big its gains would be. The most prominent features of Kuwait's humanitarian message, which it has upheld from the beginning, have risen above ethnic, religious, sectarian and geographic barriers, motivated only by humanitarian generosity.

Such generosity has taken diverse forms and has not been confined to a single fund or mechanism. As His Highness the Amir noted in his speech, 'Kuwaiti charities and charitable associations

and its peoples' fundraising committees have set an example by their continued support of many humanitarian projects in Asia and Africa, and by individual initiatives that have become a shining example of benevolence characterizing the Kuwaiti people.'

The contributions made by the dear departed Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, former Amir of the State of Kuwait (1977–2006), were also present on that occasion. In his speech, His Highness the Amir referred to the inherited flexibility, 'wherein the State of Kuwait kept pace with the many variables and dealt with the hurdles resulting from the various challenges, by developing and modernizing the methods of providing assistance. The initiative announced by His Highness, the late Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to write off the interest on soft loans to numerous developing and least-developed countries, during the 43rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly in 1988, has become a precedent in international humanitarian work, thereby initiating a quantum leap in the developmental function of Kuwaiti diplomacy, which exemplified the genuine understanding of humanitarian needs and highlighted the humanitarian concept of such loans and assistance, the aim of which is not their recovery and the calculation of interest accrued, but rather, to reap the fruits of international multilateral humanitarian cooperation and its benefits that surpass all financial benefits.'

Such eloquent words speak volumes about the philosophy of Kuwait's contributions which bear no trace of financial or political interest, but rather seek to promote sustainable humanitarian partnership with different peoples, responding to their needs and supporting their development programs, and collaborating with them to alleviate their burdens.

From this fountain of giving sprang the bonds of fraternity and affection among the peoples who long for peace, security and an adequate response to their developmental needs, away from tensions, plots, extortion and harassment.

Diplomatic mediation and conflict resolution

In January 1964, I started my work as Office Director of His Highness the Amir, when he was Minister of Foreign Affairs. During my tenure, I saw how relations between members of the international community should be, as clearly outlined in the address of the then Minister of Foreign Affairs before the United Nations General Assembly on 14 May 1963, when he explained that Kuwait considered its membership of the UN to be a means of sharing in the responsibility of securing a better life for its people and for the peoples of other nations. He added that Kuwait constituted an integral part of the Arab nation; hence it was keen to develop strong political and economic relations with countries within the Arab League, affirming its commitment to Arab unity and its common fate. 'Kuwait pursues a policy of non-alignment with regard to all blocs. But, this does not mean that it does not have a say about what is going on in this world. We believe that everyone should speak the voice of right which must be louder than all other voices.'

That call came from a small country that was later attacked by neighboring Iraq, which was itself ruled by an adventurous political regime with no experience in international relations or respect for the principles of good neighborliness or those prescribed in the UN Charter.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's address to the UN General Assembly well reflected an experience of suffering caused by neighbors' ignorance of the ethics of inter-state relations and defiance of the international political system.

As His Highness called for peaceful settlement of disputes, he bore the brunt of suffering mixed with overlapping pure intentions in the good offices that still accompany him on the diplomatic and humanitarian missions that he has undertaken ever since his time at the foreign office.

The warm welcome that marked Kuwait's admission to the UN was a strong indicator that Kuwait had the necessary means for resolving outstanding issues; hence, His Highness launched his

diplomacy of eradicating hotbeds of tension, the most recent of which were Iran's claims to Bahrain and its impact on Gulf and regional stability.

His Highness the Amir, in common with citizens of the Gulf and all Arab countries, was fully aware of the sensitivities of this issue, which required handling with great caution and precision. Therefore, communications were carried out with extreme confidentiality, and discretion and meetings were held in Teheran and Geneva where an agreement was concluded about the role of the UN inasmuch as it reflected the Bahraini people's aspirations and feelings about the future.

The outcome was a set of arrangements developed by the special envoy of the UN Secretary-General to identify the demands of the Bahraini people who stressed their claim for historical legitimacy and their commitment to the formula passed on to them.

Thus, a case that had caused great confusion, which had aggravated instability and stoked the fires of tension, was now closed and Bahrain proceeded to exercise its sovereignty as an active member of the United Nations.

Achieving Arab solidarity was the greatest wish of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad who considered it the optimal means for enhancing the status of the Arab nation. He believed that the elimination of differences between Arab states should be given top priority; hence he did not quit but kept travelling between the capitals of Mauritania and Morocco, holding discreet meetings in an attempt to resolve the dispute between the two states.

His Highness' biggest mission was to settle the acute differences between Cairo and Riyadh regarding Yemen. He made repeated visits to Cairo, Jeddah and Riyadh in order to reconcile the parties, and held several meetings Kuwait, but without any resolution of the conflict. So in 1966 he headed to Cairo where he asked the late President Gamal Abdel-Nasser to hold an Arab summit. However, President Nasser did not approve and accused the late King Faisal of undermining the

republican regime in Yemen. I recall that His Highness Sheikh Sabah pointed out during his talks with the Egyptian president that relying on intelligence reports is a bad thing because they promote lies and withhold good news.

His mediations regarding Yemen were physically and politically stressful. An agreement was reached only in the aftermath of the 1967 defeat and the withdrawal of the Egyptian army from Yemen.

Nevertheless, His Highness did not leave Yemen to fight its battles alone. In 1972, when border tension erupted between north and south Yemen, he played an active mediating role. Carrying Kuwait's credibility and noble goals with him, he went to Yemen where he managed to conclude a peace agreement that ended the fighting between the two sides. By virtue of his mediation with the conflicting parties – which suffered ideological discrepancies between the north and south – a reconciliation summit was held between the two presidents in Kuwait on 30 March 1979. This meeting ended up inflaming tensions and later contributed to supporting the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) program to achieve stability and development in Yemen.

The Gulf and the South

Kuwait's soft diplomacy did not overlook its responsibilities towards the Gulf and the South. A special division was dedicated to the development of a practical program to support the peoples of the United Arab Emirates and South Yemen. The program was not confined to development assistance, but covered all aspects of life, especially infrastructure, schools and hospitals, in addition to attracting a large numbers of students into education in various Kuwaiti institutions. Additionally, a separate budget was allocated and managed by a dedicated team that liaised with relevant authorities in these areas which represented a strategic, historical and geographical extension for Kuwait.

On the other hand, the scholarships offered by Kuwait to North African students – especially from Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco – were an important means of communication with those relatively distant geographical spots. The scholarships instilled a Kuwaiti identity, with all its dimensions, in the hearts of those students who went back to their countries bearing a love for Kuwait and who later went on to hold senior positions. This demonstrates the positive outcome nurtured by Kuwait's soft diplomacy.

Britain's withdrawal and the United Arab Emirates

Following the Labor-led British government's declaration to withdraw its military troops from the Gulf, and immediately after the completion of this withdrawal in 1971, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, the then Foreign Minister, led an effective diplomatic action to establish a federation of Gulf states including Bahrain, Qatar and the seven emirates, in order to maintain historical regional legitimacy as a source of stability and as the best means of preserving its structures. His pan-Arabism lent further impetus to his tours across the Gulf region, and drove him to propose all possible formulas to establish such a federation. Despite his awareness of the obstacles, he did not hesitate to go the extra mile and meet with whomever he felt was capable of contributing to the realization of his dream.

By communicating with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, whose leadership showed a similar keenness to secure stability in the region, their desires were united and a single team was set up from both parties with His Highness the Amir Sabah Al-Ahmad representing Kuwait and HRH Amir Nawaf bin Abdulaziz representing Saudi Arabia. The joint delegation liaised with officials, chiefly including the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan, the late Sheikh Isa bin Salman, and Sheikh Ahmad bin Ali Al-Thani, the ruler of Qatar. But practically, a federation was necessary in order to ensure stability across the seven emirates, especially as Bahrain and Qatar drifted towards independence and eventually joined the United Nations.

Given all the above, His Highness the Amir's imprint shall remain indelible in the political history of the United Arab Emirates as well as the present of Bahrain and Qatar.

A council for Gulf Arab cooperation

In 1980, during the Arab Summit held in Amman, the late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the then Amir of Kuwait, proposed to the leaders of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar, an agreement to promote joint Gulf action in which they would form a homogeneous group in order to provide a security shield, political weight, an economic market and a common identity with the capability of influencing Arab and regional events.

Having deliberated with his counterparts the Amir set up a team of Kuwaiti academics to develop a working paper to be discussed by the various delegations and eventually forwarded to the foreign ministers of the Gulf Sates.

The foreign ministers held two meetings in Muscat and Riyadh in March 1981 to discuss the paper, where they agreed on the general principles and structure of the propose council and hailed the efforts made by Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad.

On 25 May 1981, the Gulf Cooperation Council was established and its statutes declared in an agreement concluded by the respective Gulf leaders. The member states were keen to avoid formulas that could be interpreted as expressing any intention to separate the Gulf region from wider Arab affairs. The Council's mechanism also incorporated a high degree of flexibility that would accommodate gradual action and maintain the national identity of the member states.

There is no doubt that His Highness the Amir's role as a focal point for monitoring the operational aspects and his vast experience and strong keenness to link the Gulf dimension with the collective Arab decision, constituted a determining factor in the launch of the GCC.

The Palestinian cause

His Highness the Amir is known for taking the Palestinian case with him wherever he goes, never hesitating to broach the subject with world leaders or to criticise the stance of the USA, in front of American presidents and in the White House. I remember when Arab foreign ministers formed a delegation to meet with US President Johnson in the wake of the defeat of 1967. The delegation was led by the late Omar Saqqaf, the then Saudi Foreign Minister, and included Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad and the then Algerian Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

Following the meeting, Abdelaziz Bouteflika told me that he never thought Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, as the Foreign Minister of a small country, would criticise the US position as firmly as he did during his talks with the US President. The very same scene was repeated with President Nixon in 1973.

His Highness the Amir handled the Palestinian cause with great care and sincerity, allowing the officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization to benefit from Kuwait's financial, political and media resources. Palestine became present in Kuwait's life domestically, and dominated it diplomatically as the Palestinian cause became a crucial issue for Kuwait.

When I was Ambassador of Kuwait to the United Nations, I remember that the Palestinian issue was our only concern, especially during Kuwait's membership of the Security Council (1978–79) where it served as financier, mouthpiece, home and representative of the issue.

Kuwait's contributions in this concern are carved in its heart and conscience, in Arab and international archives, and in events across the Arab world, including Arab summits and Arab League meetings.

His Highness the Amir succeeded in establishing a pan-Arab political system through Kuwait's diplomacy, which heightened its presence in the Arab League's political, economic, media and cultural deliberations and developed an unshakeable approach based on adherence to the principles of the Arab League Charter, ensuring that the Arab League's decisions became a national commitment, whatever the consequences.

It was within the spirit of such generous pan-Arabism, which characterized the State of Kuwait at an early stage, that I was witness to the meeting held between the late Abdel-Khaleq Hassouna, the then Secretary-General of the Arab League, and His Highness the Amir, at the 1969 Arab Summit in Riyadh, where the late President Gamal Abdel-Nasser stormed out of the meeting in protest at weak Arab solidarity. Knowing that pure pan-Arab sentiments would triumph, Hassouna sought the help of His Highness the Amir to provide assistance to Egypt, which had been ravaged by the 1967 war.

Kuwait's contribution to the 1967 war – as noted at the beginning of this chapter – by sending a battalion of soldiers to Sinai, was perhaps an honest translation of the principles of Abdel-Khaleq Hassouna. This was repeated in 1973 war during which thirteen Kuwaiti soldiers were martyred in battles for the liberation of Egypt and Kuwaiti blood was mixed with that of Egyptians, reflecting the strong bonds of brotherhood and intimate relations between the two brotherly countries and peoples.

Kuwait maintained a similar military presence on the Syrian front in 1973, in compliance with the principle of collective responsibility for the defense of Arab lands.

Today, in cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council, Kuwait continues to be a source of political and financial security for the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Events in Lebanon

In 1975, Lebanon was plunged into a serious political phase with the outbreak of civil war, which took its toll on the country and almost destroyed the Lebanese state. The war involved Palestinian forces on one side and Syrian forces on the other, in addition to international dimensions that crept onto the scene of the fighting. This prompted the Arab League to form a six-member committee in January 1989, headed by His Highness the Amir Sabah Al-Ahmad, to develop an agreement that would end the armed conflict.

The Amir harnessed his efforts and Kuwait's resources to achieve his goal, recognizing that Arab and European capitals and Washington should all agree on a means of putting an end to this devastating war. The report that was submitted by the Amir to the Arab Foreign Ministers Council, on 30 March 1989, ultimately became the basis for the final peace agreement between the six parties in Taif.

The Iran–Iraq War

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad realized early on the gravity of the Iran–Iraq War, which broke out in September 1980, and its implications for the security and stability of Kuwait, the Gulf States and Arab relations. He knew perfectly well that factors of geography had a compelling influence on Kuwait's security, given that the battles between the two countries were raging along its borders; not to mention the hardships of war which overshadowed Kuwait's political, security and geographical situation.

Mindful of its impact on Arab and regional security and of Arab division over the war, and as Head of the seven-member Arab Committee, the Amir approached various world capitals in an attempt to mobilize support for the Iraqi position, which had accepted the Security Council's resolutions, and to settle the dispute through peaceful means.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad visited the major capitals of Asia, Africa and the United Nations, attending all gatherings that could be beneficial to the position of Iraq and the Arab League, and taking part in all conferences, pursuing his firm conviction that the war should end in accordance with Security Council resolutions.

As the spokesman of the mission, His Highness was an ardent champion who tirelessly accepted his responsibility and toured all points of the globe for its sake. Despite widespread skepticism he went to Iran where he drew the attention of all capitals, especially the major ones, even after the Iranian capture of Iraq's Al-Faw peninsula.

The Islamic dimension

This shining outcome would have never emerged and grown without Kuwait's firm commitment to the principles underpinning its diplomacy, which – as stated at the beginning of this chapter – have relied on its sensitive diplomatic handling of issues and its flexibility in the pursuit of moderation. It has also remained aloof from extremism, rejecting extremist vocabulary, respecting credibility, fulfilling its obligations and continuing to adhere to the clear expression of its values, with no place for wrong explanations or misinterpretations. Its clear expression of its positions and views has risen above the exploitation of opportunities or any vulgar argument.

Anyone who plans to set sail in the diplomacy of good will, reconciliation of opinions, and peaceful resolution of conflict, must be armed with credibility, commitment, moderation, objectivity, patience and perseverance.

His Highness the Amir has adhered to these conditions in Kuwait's diplomacy. He has worked day and night, tirelessly wading through rough waters and travelling broken roads, unembarrassed by the sensitivities of any situation, in pursuit of equitable outcomes.

It was with an awareness of such challenges and complexities, and motivated by his concern for the common Arab interest, that he attempted to talk President Nasser into approaching King Faisal.

He was adamant in his insistence on facing those sensitivities and embarrassments. I have seen him throughout these times, when I accompanied him to several conferences in modest hotels and uncomfortable residences. None of this ever seemed to bother him, for he had the ability to understand the root causes and nature of the conflicts that he sought to resolve, and to find the right point of entry for a solution. This was based on his conviction that Kuwait needed a friendly Arab world in which understanding prevailed, and on his awareness of Kuwait's size and the delicacy of its geographical location.

His Highness has always believed in the diplomacy of the 'reduction to zero' of any particular problem. In the aftermath of the ill-fated invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and as a proponent of political pragmatism, he focused his efforts on achieving such a goal, maintaining that there should be no animosity in politics, only permanent interests.

After the invasion, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad went to Yemen in order to restore relations with them. He then went to North Africa where he reached an agreement to restore relations with Sudan. He also communicated with the Kingdom of Jordan and the PLO headed by Mahmoud Abbas, cemented ties with the new Iraqi government, and continued his visits to the Iranian Republic.

Within the Islamic Conference, founded in 1969 in Jeddah, the Amir's efforts extended to issues that were relevant to Arab and some Islamic states, culminating in his intervention to settle the dispute between Pakistan and Bangladesh. During the Islamic Summit in Lahore he traveled with delegates to Dhaka to meet with the late Mujibur Rahman, leader of Bangladesh, where he was able to overcome the obstacles that stood in the path of a peaceful settlement between Islamabad and Dhaka.

Another noteworthy aspect was the diplomacy of oil pursued by Kuwait within the Gulf Cooperation Council, as a binding strategy of understanding within OPEC which took seriously the need for partnership between producers and consumers. This strategy aimed to prevent the possibility of unreasonably high oil prices, which would harm consumers and adversely affect global stability, while curbing excessive production that might lead to a sharp drop in oil prices.

Development in Asia

Kuwait has reached out to and left a diplomatic imprint on every single spot on the world map, no matter how remote. Among the diplomatic concerns of Kuwait and, naturally, of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, Asia has been the priority.

On 16 October 2012, Kuwait hosted the first Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) Summit based upon a Kuwaiti initiative that reflected its understanding of Asia's strategic weight in terms of geography, development and investment. The summit unfolded against a backdrop of positive changes that earned Asian countries a remarkable position in their march towards development, and helped them develop plans to attract modern technological investment.

In his opening speech, His Highness the Amir spoke about the suffering and discontent of vast areas of the Asian continent due to several various reasons. He identified poverty, poor health care, illiteracy, war and environmental problems as the impediments to development. He sought to find a solution to these constraints by calling on members 'to act without delay to achieve economic integration between our countries by providing work opportunities and job security. In face of the repercussions of this crisis, we are required, in general, to participate in drawing up a new map for a new financial order that accomplishes progress and modernity, by keeping pace with the most sophisticated international standards, and the best banking and fiscal practices.'

In this regard, the Amir presented an initiative that embodied Asian cooperation, by calling for the mobilization of US$2 billion for a program intended to finance development projects in non-Arab Asian countries, as well as other projects contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. He believed it might be appropriate to assign an Asian development institution such as the Asian Development Bank to manage the proposed financial resources, as well as supervise their utilization in implementing projects in the interest of the Least Developed Countries, which, as the countries most in need of these resources, benefited exclusively from the resources of the Asian Development Bank.

In this context, the Amir announced the contribution of US$300 million from the State of Kuwait and called on other member states to donate through the ACD Forum. The Amir crowned Kuwait's contribution by announcing Kuwait's willingness to join the Asian Development Bank group. He also proposed that Kuwait would host a mechanism to be agreed upon by experts in order to secure a permanent institutional structure for cooperation.

Kuwait and Africa

On 19 November 2013, the Amir opened the Third Africa–Arab Summit under the theme 'Partners in Development and Investment'. His opening speech reflected Kuwait's vision regarding Africa, as he maintained that the summit reflected 'our awareness of the importance of economic cooperation, representing as it does the basis of common interests, for which we proceed to fulfill the strategic partnership we seek'.

The Amir added that Kuwait had long sought to strengthen its partnership with Africa. For that reason, he directed officials of the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development to offer soft loans to African countries in the amount of US$1 billion over five years, not to mention investments by

a number of Kuwaiti corporations in various sectors. The Amir also commended the philanthropic work of Kuwaiti charitable associations, which expanded their activities to include many African countries. It was at this Summit that an annual award of US$1 million was launched in the name of the late Dr Abdulrahman Al-Sumait, focusing on development research in Africa.

Kuwait and non-alignment

In his address before the United Nations General Assembly on 14 May 1963, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad voiced Kuwait's full commitment to the policy of non-alignment and its positive implications. He affirmed that Kuwait would not hesitate to use its good offices or participate in any effort to tackle hotbeds of tension.

Positive non-alignment entails a capacity to maintain positions that may be deemed offensive or inconsistent with the views of either or both camps, or a bloc within the UN. In this context, Kuwait has always believed in the importance of taking a firm stand and of having moral courage, and of avoiding obscurity, uncertainty or hiding behind terminology.

This fact has surfaced strongly throughout Kuwait's active participation in the meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as at the Security Council where Kuwait has played a vital advocacy role among aligned members in order to win their support for African and Arab causes.

I have personally experienced the impact of that role, which left an impression within the Security Council and beyond that this small state carries a set of responsibilities on its shoulders, as a representative member of the Arab nation and an advocate for those seeking global justice through the Security Council.

During the Cold War of the 1960s, the Soviet Union vetoed Kuwait's admission to the United Nations. However, after achieving UN membership, Kuwait established diplomatic relations with

Russia and opened an embassy in Moscow. It was also an active promoter of General Assembly resolution on the restoration of the People's Republic of China's seat at the UN.

In April 1981, the Amir visited Moscow to brief Andrey Gromyko, the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union, on a Gulf Cooperation Council project. The visit came as a discretionary political action to secure international ground for the success of the GCC.

Kuwait and the United Nations

On 13 May 1963, after a two-year long wait resulting from Soviet veto, Kuwait joined the UN as an independent state. Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, in his capacity as Foreign Minister, delivered a speech on behalf of the State of Kuwait in which he thanked the UN for admitting Kuwait.

His first address from the United Nations rostrum bore a pledge that Arabism would always remain embedded within Kuwait's political, security and economic conscience and consciousness. He noted that Kuwait's destiny lay in the bosom of the Arab nation and that its Arab League policy would be to obey the truth whatever the difficulties, affirming Kuwait's commitment to the cause of truth and justice.

However, history records that Kuwait's commitment to the Arab League failed to secure Kuwait's protection from extortion and personal pursuits, which led to the Iraqi invasion on 2 August 1990.

For the first time the history of the UN, an active member state was invaded – in fact abolished – by another state. The UN responded promptly to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and through a series of resolutions condemned Iraq and called for its withdrawal and the return of Kuwaiti legitimacy.

The UN continued its serious efforts to address the invasion and its many consequences. International diplomacy shot into high gear in order to find a peaceful solution and restore the status quo. The UN Secretary-General went to Iraq twice, but the Iraqi leadership refused his interventions. Other endeavors also failed.

Kuwait appealed to the international community for support to achieve complete withdrawal. On 29 November 1990, the Security Council issued its unprecedented Resolution 678 to use force through an international coalition including Egypt, Syria, the Gulf states and Morocco, in addition to the US, other Western countries, and Africa.

This decision was a global cry to save Kuwait. Some member states responded with armed forces, some with logistical assistance, and others with financial support.

On 26 February 1991, in accordance with the UN resolution, Kuwait was liberated. The Security Council continued its efforts to handle the situation via Resolution 687 of 3 April 1991, which put Iraq under the supervision of the Security Council. It also set up a committee to demarcate the borders according to the agreements signed between the two countries in 1923 and 1932. Consequently, Kuwaiti legitimacy was restored to a position that was different from the one that existed before, as the borders were demarcated according to the provisions of Resolution 833 of 27 May 1993.

Kuwait fastened the ropes of stability and tranquility to the dock of the Security Council which, according to Resolution 833, safeguarded Kuwait's secure borders, sovereignty and regional integrity.

In this new chapter of Kuwait's history, His Highness the Amir was able to realize his project of deterrence which had been at the back of his mind ever since independence. This included protecting Kuwait from extortion, eliminating hotbeds of tension that extended far beyond land and

population conflicts, and understanding the problematics of the Arab situation. Henceforward, Kuwait forged a collective strategic political partnership with the UN and engaged in developmental programs. This increased Kuwait's responsibilities beyond political and economic aspects, to include moral responsibility and humanitarian implications throughout the international community, not only among developing countries.

Kuwait has maintained a close partnership and strong ties with the global organization, which has become its legitimate reference and a tenet of its diplomacy. It has also earned a remarkable position in the international arena after the establishment of an alliance between Kuwait and the UN, represented in the special relationship between the Amir and the Secretary-General.

Kuwait recognizes that it is now in possession of the values of globalization; that is, generous giving, enlightened openness and a close bond with the UN via its diverse political, humanitarian and economic tracks, and in compliance with the values of the UN Charter.

Kuwait's humanitarian and developmental presence is embedded in the life of the UN, which has led to bilateral relations of a higher order, in particular political and moral obligations towards the organization.

This was emphasized by the Secretary-General of the UN, who said, 'It gives me great pleasure and honor to pay tribute to His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of Kuwait, in recognition of his continued support and extraordinary leadership of UN humanitarian action, and his efforts to alleviate the suffering of needy people in all countries of the world.'

In his address, His Highness the Amir emphasized '*Kuwait's belief in the importance of providing humanitarian assistance to all the needy, regardless of their geographic locations, religious beliefs or ethnic origins, and its conviction of the importance of international partnership, as well as*

the unification and activation of international efforts, aimed at the maintenance and preservation of the foundations of life – that is, the human spirit.' Accordingly, the Amir decided to double Kuwait's fixed annual voluntary contributions to UN agencies and organizations.

In response to a call by the UN Secretary-General, Kuwait hosted the International Pledging Humanitarian Conference on Syria for the third time, as a contribution from Kuwait to provide humanitarian relief to the Syrian people. Hosting this conference for the third time, undoubtedly reflects the depth and clarity of the strategic partnership between Kuwait and the United Nations.

To conclude, Kuwait today may be described as a bird that soars high in the humanitarian ether, one of its wings consisting of generosity and the other of constancy.

Chapter II

Kuwait … Humanitarian Action and Development Aid

Kuwait … Humanitarian Action and Development Aid

Amer Dhiab Al-Tamimi [(*)]

Over three centuries ago, Kuwait was founded on the premises of social solidarity, in which coincided the values of *shura* (consultation), tolerance and the sharing of responsibility between the state and the economic system. This set of values and concepts developed and gained resonance in the relations between members of the Kuwaiti society, as it became commonplace to help the households of sailors and divers to eke out a living during the traveling and diving season. Even in years of economic hardship, wealthy Kuwaiti nationals felt it was their duty to provide better education to those of low income in their country. They joined efforts to establish the Al-Mubarakiya School in 1911 and later the Al-Ahmadiya School. The tolerance of the ruling Al-Sabah family helped nurture humanitarian values and ideals, as successive rulers promoted solidarity among the people of the country.

(*) Amer Dhiab Al-Tamimi holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics from Clarkson University of Potsdam, USA (1968), and a diploma in Statistics from the Institute of Census in Washington DC, USA (1973). He served as Economic Statistics Officer at the Central Administration of Statistics and Planning, Kuwait (1968–75), part-time consultant at the United Nations Development Program in Kuwait (2008–09), and Economic Consultant at the Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Science. He was a co-founder of the Kuwait Economic Society (KES) and chaired its Board from 1994 to 2004. He was also a founding member of the Kuwait Human Rights Society, and served as its Board Member, Treasurer and Secretary from 2006 to 2012. He has published extensive studies on economic issues.

Those values and behaviours were key motives for establishing Kuwaiti support for Arab and developing countries during times of economic hardship. A case in point was the assistance extended to the Palestinians during the 1936 Revolution, despite the recession which had hit the pearl diving economy after the emergence of cultured pearl farming in Japan.

This was further enhanced as Kuwait's economic conditions became more favorable and its financial resources boomed with the beginning of the commercial export of crude oil. The philosophy and mechanisms of Kuwaiti aid will be discussed below.

Before that, however, it should be noted that ever since the beginning of the oil era in Kuwait, His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah played a significant role that enabled Kuwait to contribute to the economic development of many Arab and developing countries, and to help them address the adversities and disasters that they suffered over the past six decades.

The philosophy of development aid

The United Nations' honouring of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as 'humanitarian leader' this year was well-deserved. He has made substantial efforts to enhance Kuwait's role in the promotion of human development and the provision of humanitarian aid to poverty-stricken populations suffering from poor resources, natural disasters, war or civil and regional conflicts.

Humanitarian aid, as is well known, has become a key component of international relations over the past decades, which drove the United Nations to consider it a fundamental tenet of its sustainable development programs, plans and strategies.

All divine religions and other beliefs have, throughout the ages, urged the wealthy to come to the aid of needy communities. The principles of helping the poor and needy were clearly set forth in the Holy Quran and the *hadith* (the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad).

The philosophy of industrialized countries providing aid and assistance, which developed during the twentieth century, rests on the fact that rich people and businessmen should bear the social responsibility to help the poor, by earmarking funds for projects catering to the needs of marginalized groups within their own communities. Rich countries should also secure necessary funds to improve the quality of life in poor countries.

Many thinkers and philosophers in advanced capitalist countries (such as in the EU and the USA) have urged their governments to fulfill their obligations towards poor nations, which continue to suffer low living standards in which a significant proportion of the population live below poverty line according to UN definitions.

Although most political parties have attached great importance to humanitarian aid in their agendas, this has faced broad objection from other forces, who maintain that others are not entitled to income generated by their people. However, they eventually developed a conviction about the importance of helping others to overcome the hardships of life and impediments to development by offering soft loans and investment in vital projects that would improve the quality of life and standards of living.

Many politicians believe that improving the lives of other nations creates new job opportunities and enables industrialized countries to increase their income via exports to those countries, when their economic capacities improve. Hence, aid is as much a means of helping others as it is a way of improving global economic performance, which reflects positively on rich and poor alike.

Basic developmental projects, such as those aimed at improving infrastructure and facilities, benefit not only the poor in those countries, but rather all members of society. When completed, such projects may also benefit investors and entrepreneurs when they set up businesses.

Development aid includes all forms of assistance given by states, international organizations and regional institutions, such as funding, technical assistance, training or any other form of financial aid.

The World Health Organization (WHO), for example, represents a model for delivering medical and preventive aid, by providing the necessary resources for poor countries to control epidemics and endemic diseases. It also provides vaccines against childhood diseases, such as measles, smallpox and malaria.

The WHO has managed to provide medical assistance and eliminate many diseases using its resources and the support of charities and humanitarian institutions. The importance of such aid to the least developed countries goes without saying, given that healthcare is a key factor in community development and improving living conditions. WHO operates in parallel with other agencies such as Doctors without Borders (MSF), which provides emergency medical aid to the sick and the war-wounded, as well as to victims of epidemics, famines and natural disasters.

Such voluntary healthcare affirms the philosophy of humanitarian aid and the role of human beings in helping their fellow man, regardless of ethnic, religious or sectarian affiliations. They also risk their lives in very difficult and hazardous conditions, especially in natural disasters or at the outbreak of conflicts and civil wars, not to mention exposure to communicable and endemic diseases in certain locations.

I have focused on this example of humanitarian aid due to its preventative significance and crucial role in improving the health conditions of human beings, enabling them to enjoy life without exposure to diseases or epidemics. However, healthcare providers and specialized agencies can only carry out their humanitarian mission if the financial resources are secured.

The UN and its agencies have forged a set of concepts and values for humanitarian assistance that have developed into decisions governing inter-state relations.

In 1945, in the aftermath of World War II, the United States decided to adopt the Marshall Plan to help re-build war-battered cities, villages, infrastructure and facilities in Europe. The aim of this ambitious program was to strengthen ties between Western Europe and the United States during the Cold War that raged between the Soviet Union and the West.

Following the success of this project, which helped many countries in Western Europe restore their capacity to achieve economic growth and prosperity, the United States decided to provide economic support to countries in poor regions. In 1959, the Senate issued an amendment to the Mutual Security Act declaring that 'development in low-income regions was a US objective along with and additional to other foreign-policy interests'. Foreign aid gained further prominence soon after the President John Kennedy took office in 1961.

Since the early 1960s, major powers have made significant efforts to develop economic and development aid policies with a view to improving economic conditions in developing countries, especially in Asia, Africa and Latin America, where poverty, disease and ignorance were endemic. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) established the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to make national resources available for providing assistance and long-term funds to poor countries.

Such developments in the aid system in the United States and Europe, and later Japan, led the UN to adopt a set of resolutions about the standards of development aid. Many relevant agencies were also established. But most important was the UN General Assembly's resolution of 1970, according to which economically advanced countries should progressively increase their official devel-

opment assistance to the least developed countries and exert their best efforts to reach a minimum net amount of 0.7 percent of their GNP.

This commitment was reiterated in many development-related conferences throughout subsequent years. However, although leaders of the world's richest countries have confirmed their commitment in many international meetings, rich countries are undoubtedly still far from reaching the 0.7 percent target which, if it was ever reached, would secure significant resources and abundant funds for capital expenditure in developing countries.

If the target were to be reached, the twenty richest countries would be pay at least US$300 billion annually, which would be adequate to cover all kinds of developmental programs in developing countries. Such an amount should be directed to education, housing and healthcare programs as well as main facilities, basic services and infrastructure.

Although major countries continue to improve their contributions, the total sum is only a rounding error compared to their astronomical military budgets or the fortunes spent on the weapons and equipment used in local and regional conflicts and which lead only to the destruction of cities and infrastructure, the killing of humans, and the utter devastation of normal life in many countries.

Until recently, the philosophy of development has placed great emphasis on public spending on development and social programs to improve the quality of life and living standards in poor countries. The development budgets of rich countries were, therefore, managed by the governments of the developing countries. But the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of this century have revealed the possibilities for transgression, wrongful acts and the unlawful use of development aid by officials in beneficiary countries. This has added weight to the role of civil societies and legislators in donor countries to ensure that funds are channelled into the right areas by legitimate means.

Many grassroots organizations in beneficiary countries have also played an important monitoring role to ensure that funds are used properly. However, a key condition for achieving the desired benefits from such funds is to supervise the implementation of projects directly rather than through bureaucratic government institutions.

This may not be a desirable solution for the governments of beneficiary countries, but it should not prevent the UN and donor countries from fulfilling their role in developing mechanisms, identifying programs and means of spending, and monitoring their implementation to guarantee the best use of such aid.

Whatever the case, the prerequisites of development in developing countries will continue to be important and will need huge funds for many years and decades to come. The humanitarian community must develop concepts and values that can govern the provision of assistance and enhance the efficacy of monitoring.

Kuwait and its humanitarian responsibilities

While Kuwait first emerged as a small harmonious community, by the beginning of the eighteenth century it had established itself as a national entity. Seeking security, stability and a safe haven away from the turbulences that swept across their original communities, many groups and individuals from neighboring and surrounding countries and deserts settled in Kuwait. Many of them came to Kuwait in pursuit of a livelihood.

Consequently, Kuwaiti society developed a body of coherent social values that promoted strong neighborly and family ties and compassion in adversity. The economic activities established in the country, such as travel and diving, when the heads of household were away from their homes for

long periods, led to a keen interest among Kuwaitis to cater for the subsistence and security needs of the families of those working on pearling and trading ships. The response of the community to accidents and catastrophes, including shipwrecks and natural disasters (such as heavy rains) became automatic, and donations of money to help those suffering from disasters became an inherent feature of the Kuwaiti consciousness.

In the early twentieth century, Kuwaitis – especially those who living in other countries such as India, Iraq or Aden – developed deeper cultural perceptions and became increasingly keen to educate as many of their children as possible. Realizing that education needed adequate funds, they were prompted to donate whatever they could to establish the first regular school in the country, the Al-Mubarakiya School, in 1911.

This constituted a pivotal moment in Kuwaiti history as it spurred the establishment of civil society and increased its capacity to meet the basic needs for modernization and capacity-building. The foundation of the Al-Mubarakiya School by the efforts and funds of the people took on a special importance in which the rich, who at that time belonged to trading families, instilled social responsibility in the country.

Such acts of charity continued during the first decades of the twentieth century, where Kuwaitis contributed to the foundation of cultural forums, mosques and schools including the Al-Ahmadiya and Al-Qabaliya schools, before the establishment of a formal education system. Kuwaiti philanthropy also extended beyond its borders, where many citizens sent cash and in-kind donations to Palestine in support of the 1936 *intifada* led by Haj Amin Al-Husseini.

In the early 1950s, with the discovery of oil and the subsequent income from export earnings, the Government of Kuwait, led by the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, earmarked funds to support Oman and the Trucial States (now the United Arab Emirates) as well as southern Arabia. The General Authority of the South and the Arabian Gulf was established to support education, health-care and social work in countries such as Bahrain, the UAE, Oman, Yemen and even Sudan. The Authority was chaired by the late Ahmad Al-Saqqaf who made great efforts and used his relations and acquaintances in those countries to pursue philanthropic activities there.

Additionally, Kuwait provided further impetus to volunteerism by the establishment of the People's Committee for Donation Collection to support national projects and military efforts in Algeria and Egypt. The Committee was established in 1954 by a group of wealthy Kuwaiti tradesmen and philanthropists, under the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who pooled their resources to provide assistance and relief to eligible individuals and institutions. His Highness the Amir, who played a significant role in managing the Committee from its inception, was appointed as its honorary president.

The Committee represented Kuwait's community-led efforts to support Arab struggles for independence and provide adequate funds to improve their economic and social conditions. The donations secured huge amounts of money for the military struggles in Egypt, Algeria, Syria, Palestine and Jordan. The Committee also provided funds for the needy and afflicted in Arab and Islamic countries, including Afghanistan and Pakistan.

But more important was the foundation of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) in 1961, shortly after Kuwait gained its independence and established the constitutional

state. The aim of the Fund was to provide soft loans with concessionary terms such as extended grace periods and lower interest rates. Meanwhile, it conducted technical studies for projects that needed funding.

The Fund was originally endowed with an operating capital of KWD50 million, which was increased to KWD200 million in 1966, KWD1 billion in 1974 and KWD2 billion in 1981.

Since its inception, KFAED has extended 720 loans to 100 Arab and other developing countries, totalling over KWD5 billion (US$17.7 billion). The loans were used to fund vital projects including infrastructure, roads, facilities, silos and communications.

The Fund is a key executing agent of development aid programs adopted by the Kuwaiti Government. The State of Kuwait has also contributed to the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), which was established in 1972 by agreement of the Economic and Social Council of the Arab League. The Kuwait-based AFESD is designed to support development projects in Arab countries. As is well known, the Arab states of the Gulf, including Kuwait, account for the greatest share of contributions to its capital.

We should mention in this connection Kuwait's contributions to the promotion and financing of development in many countries of the world in different forms and in indirect ways, such as the activities of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Thus, it may be argued that Kuwait has been present in various development assistance activities over the past six decades, and is always trying to employ such activities for the good of mankind.

Additionally, KFAED has made great contributions in other areas, such as international efforts to combat epidemics in several countries, especially in Africa. For example:

- ***Contribution as a founding member of the Tropical Disease Foundation*** ***KWD300,860***
- ***Guinea Worm Eradication Trust Fund*** ***KWD75,561***
- ***Fifth phase of the Onchocerciasis Control Program (OCP)*** ***KWD229,850***
- ***Final phase of the Guinea Worm Eradication Program*** ***KWD147,088***
- ***Supplementary financing of the final phase of the Guinea Worm Eradication Program*** ***KWD143,455***
- ***Final phase of the Onchocerciasis Control Program (OCP) in Africa*** ***KWD425,854***
- ***African Program for Onchocerciasis (APOC)*** ***KWD598,523***

In addition, KFAED has provided grants and assistance for numerous educational, environmental and other specialized programs, chief among which were:

- ***Arab Gulf Program for the Support of UN Development Organizations*** ***KWD8,864,451***
- ***International Development Law Organization (IDLO)*** ***KWD1,150,000***
- ***General Organization for the South & Arabian Gulf in Bahrain*** ***KWD1,023,577***

Within Africa the aid program has included:

- ***Special Program for Sub-Saharan African Countries (IFAD)*** ***KWD4,590,370***
- ***Arab Planning Institute*** ***KWD2,370,173***

These grants clearly confirm KFAED's role in supporting humanitarian efforts to combat diseases and epidemics and to address the problems facing the natural environment in many countries, not to mention its support for research and educational projects to benefit people around the globe.

Zakat House and charitable support

Other institutions in Kuwait have also provided humanitarian aid through their external programs. A case in point is the Kuwait Zakat House (*Beit Al-Zakat*) which is an official organization entrusted with providing support for the needy within Kuwait and beyond, and which is financially supported by the Government through a separate budget. The Zakat House collects alms and distributes them according to Islamic Sharia. Its projects include the following:

- Construction projects including building mosques, providing wells and water resources, and establishing schools, orphanages and hospitals;
- Orphan Support Project, which was established in 1983, enabling philanthropists and kind-hearted people in Kuwait to adopt and foster orphans through the House's appropriate mechanisms;
- Student Support Project, to finance the education of needy students abroad;
- Seasonal charity projects throughout the year, such as Iftar banquets and the Bairam sacrificial animal project, in addition to relief aid provided for the needy in crises and disasters.

In 2014, the Zakat House supported charitable activities beyond Kuwaiti borders to a total of KWD13,142,246, as follows:

- ***Construction projects (279 projects)*** ***KWD4,039,842***
- ***Orphan support (25,968 orphans)*** ***KWD4,939,843***
- ***Student support (2171 students)*** ***KWD640,060***
- ***Relief aid*** ***KWD3,347,898***
- ***Iftar banquets project*** ***KWD342,168***
- ***Bairam sacrificial animal project*** ***KWD111,345***

In 2013, the House provided a sum of KWD13,129,117 for such projects. Hence, it may be concluded that the Zakat House's annual expenditure averages KWD12–13 million (US$40–45 million).

The International Islamic Charity Organization

The International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) was established by Law No. 64 of 1986 in the State of Kuwait to fight poverty, ignorance and disease in Muslim countries. Its strategy is to pursue effective charity work and collect donations from individuals, institutions and governments to fund its charitable projects.

IICO is a humanitarian institution that aims to provide help to the needy and relief to those affected by disasters, insecurity or the devastating effects of wars and civil strife. It has been actively involved in recent years in humanitarian aid and fundraising activities to respond to the disastrous political conflict in Syria, and has collaborated with UN agencies to provide humanitarian aid for the Syrian people, especially those displaced to neighboring countries. It has recently engaged in fundraising efforts to help the people of Yemen who have endured extreme hardship as a result of conflicts and transgressions against their legitimate government.

IICO oversees several projects and programs in 136 countries and communicates with philanthropists through its various offices and branches. It has established a number of specialized committees including the Palestine Committee, the Asia Committee, and the 'Help Your Muslim Brother' Committee. The Organization also operates endowments and endowment funds such as the Health Fund, Social Fund, Cultural Fund, Development Fund, Relief Fund and the General Waqf Fund. In 2012 the budget for these committees amounted to KWD35 million. IICO's resources depend on its partnerships with the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation, and Zakat House.

The Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation and other institutions

Waqf(*) remains a deeply rooted practice in Kuwait and has become the main avenue for philanthropic activities, given the Kuwaiti people's natural disposition to endow part of their properties as *waqf* and allocate their proceeds to help those of low income and the needy abroad. *Waqf* is the act of withholding funds to be used for charity purposes. The Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation (KAPF) has focused its efforts on various projects and charitable services, emphasizing the importance of its contributions to Islamic countries. It is noteworthy that KAPF currently runs 16 cultural, educational and creative *waqf* projects.

Many other Kuwaiti charities and philanthropic organizations also provide aid and assistance outside Kuwait. The most important of these NGOs are the Abdullatif Abdullah Al-Othman Waqf, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society, Al-Falah Charity Society, in addition to other bodies that have supported efforts aimed at strengthening the role of Kuwait in providing aid to the needy in Arab and Islamic countries. In the past few years, these societies and institutions have played a significant role in helping war-affected persons in Syria, Libya, Yemen and Iraq, and in supporting the needy in Egypt.

The Kuwait Red Crescent Society

The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) ranks high among non-governmental civil society organizations devoted to aid and assistance. KRCS operates within the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent and adopts its concepts and values of humanitarian aid. Since its incep-

(*) Waqf is an Arabic term that means to stop, confine, isolate, or preserve in perpetuity certain revenues or property for religious or philanthropic purposes. Thus, it is one of the oldest examples of an endowment. A waqf endowment (plural awqaf) is a form of ongoing public service that utilizes private wealth to establish projects of public benefit.

tion, the Kuwait Red Crescent has extended assistance to many Arab and other countries. It has been involved in effective fundraising and has sent relief teams to those affected by earthquakes, floods and natural disasters, such as the devastating tsunami. It did the same during the Iranian earthquake in 2003, and the devastating earthquake that struck Japan in 2011, in addition to relief of refugees and displaced persons in disaster-stricken areas.

More recently, KRCS has provided assistance to those affected by violence and civil strife in Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia and other countries. The significance of KRCS's role was clearly manifested in its support for the Syrians, in partnership with UN agencies and the International Red Cross. Despite the complexities of the Syrian crisis and the logistical and security difficulties faced by its workers, KRCS has continued its relentless efforts to help the Syrian people.

The Society has recently launched a fundraising campaign in Kuwait to support those impacted by the military operations in Yemen, and has participated with specialized UN organizations to provide all forms of support for Yemenis in various areas.

It is self-evident that the Kuwait Red Crescent Society is one of Kuwait's foremost humanitarian associations in global aid. Thanks to the professionalism and enthusiasm of its workers and volunteers, it has become the main channel of state humanitarian assistance destined for different parts of the world.

Kuwait's humanitarian aid mechanisms

Before delving into the details of the mechanisms by which donors provide financial assistance, I wish first to point out that Kuwait's support to developing countries has not been confined to Development Fund loans, but has included free direct assistance to many Arab and developing countries. On several occasions, during Arab and Islamic summits as well as in conferences held by

international organizations and UN agencies, Kuwait has pledged financial assistance. Such assistance has been provided through UN programs and projects run by the Arab League or the Organization of the Islamic Conference, according to the relative mechanisms of each organization.

According to a World Bank report, Kuwait has played a key role in extending humanitarian assistance to developing countries, with official development assistance (ODA) averaging 1.5 percent of gross national income in the past four years. This far exceeds the UN target of 0.7 percent. Despite the lack of detailed reports about its exact magnitude, the UN attaches high value to the humanitarian aid offered by the private sector and individuals to developing countries, humanitarian organizations and charity projects.

UN and World Bank reports confirm that Kuwaiti aid and funds have covered Arab, African, south-east Asian, Pacific and European countries, in addition to a number of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to the reports, the aid awarded has been distributed as follows:

- 54 percent to Arab countries
- 19.3 percent to sub-Saharan Africa
- 10 percent to south-east Asia, the Pacific and Europe
- 2.2 percent to Latin America and the Caribbean

The reports state that Kuwaiti-funded projects have been focused mainly on the energy, water, wastewater, agriculture, silos, ports and telecommunications sectors.

Owing to its extensive experience over the past half-century, Kuwait has been able to create a national cadre of professionals trained in development aid. Nevertheless, the development funds still depend also on experienced professionals from other Arab countries to study the proposed projects.

These specialists exert substantial efforts to develop detailed studies for those basic projects, calculating the time, effort and travel required for the difficult conditions prevailing in those countries.

It is noteworthy that some of these projects were originally proposed by Kuwait's ambassadors within the beneficiary countries. The ambassadors also offered advice and consultation to experts of the development institutions, and many of them have facilitated in the studies of the proposed projects. As is known, conducting feasibility studies in such countries is not an easy task since many of them lack adequate databases, if any.

Although international institutions such as UN organizations, the World Bank and the IMF, carry out studies and collect data and statistics, the incidence of error remains a possibility while conducting such feasibility studies.

The implementation of such projects, on the other hand, depends on a set of basic procedures to ensure that the most cost-effective bid is selected through transparent mechanisms. This has led to the implementation of vital projects with the utmost quality, even though many Kuwaitis question their government as to why local projects are not implemented with the same quality as those carried out abroad by Kuwaiti development institutions or through Kuwait's development aid programs.

Implementation mechanisms

The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development offers a model regarding mechanisms for implementation. Upon the Board's approval of a project, the government of the recipient country may ask consultants to develop appropriate designs and prepare tender documents, before inviting eligible local suppliers to submit bids. Upon selection of the best bid, a payment schedule is established in accordance with the implementation process. The borrower then submits interim progress reports to the Fund, which reserves the right to carry out follow-up missions and visit the project site to monitor progress.

Carrying out such projects is no easy matter in countries that suffer from bureaucracy, slow documentation and other problems related to administrative and financial corruption. Therefore, many development and humanitarian aid agencies face a range of obstacles when funding specific projects. However, the Fund has developed extensive experience in tackling such matters, which has enabled it to control its capital costs and administrative expenses.

The most recent available data show that KFAED has provided loans to developing countries with a total value of KWD5.2 billion (US$17.7 billion) in key sectors such as agriculture, communications, energy, water, wastewater, transportation and other services including healthcare and education. The Fund has become a development institution with a global dimension after expanding its activities to include the entire developing world.

The implications of Kuwaiti aid for developing countries

International reports and research studies indicate that international funds and aid to developing countries have contributed to the development of their infrastructure and enabled them to execute many projects in a variety of fields. This has led to the promotion of economic development and a boost to economic growth rates, which means that Kuwait has played a crucial role in the development of the economies of many developing countries.

Water and wastewater treatment are among the major projects funded or financially supported by Kuwait, as water continues to pose unique challenges for many developing countries, including Arab countries such as Jordan and Lebanon. The development of drinking and irrigation water resources clearly responds to the needs of the growing populations in these countries. Thus, programs that aim at securing adequate water supplies for human use, irrigation and for sheep and cattle within livestock programs, are considered particularly vital in many Arab and developing countries.

Similarly, the co-financing of infrastructure projects – including road construction, transportation, communications and electric power – is an essential and effective contribution in laying the foundations for progress in these countries. This also helps public and private entities to implement secondary high-return-on-investment projects, so as to improve the livelihoods of the countries' citizens.

Other Kuwait-funded projects include the reconstruction of war-torn countries (such as Afghanistan and Lebanon) that have suffered civil wars, regional conflicts and the sabotage of infrastructure and basic facilities, schools and hospitals. Kuwaiti funds have been used in reconstruction operations, in partnership with other donor countries. Countries affected by natural disasters, such as Thailand, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, have also benefited from international aid in restoring normal life, in which Kuwait has played a central role.

In addition to the foregoing, funding agencies in these countries have benefited from development finance that has helped them cater to the needs of their economies. International funding, including Kuwait's contribution, has helped to develop investment and financing institutions, foreign and domestic trade finance, and microfinance.

Microfinance operations have been heavily focused on the agricultural sector, where funds and soft credits have been offered to women engaged in limited-capital businesses, thereby creating job opportunities. As is commonly known, women account for a significant proportion of agricultural labor in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Such vital projects would not have been possible without the aid provided by donor countries, international institutions and development funds. Therefore, economic development remains a humanitarian process that requires considerable effort and contributions from various institutions and civil society organizations in various parts of the world.

The funds and in-kind assistance provided by rich countries to those that have difficulty securing food for their citizens, constitute a key aspect of aid. Kuwait has shared in the identification of mechanisms for such assistance and has hosted conferences and seminars to address the challenges posed by the food crisis that has unfolded in the past decade as a result of the decline in agricultural activity in many countries. The past decades have witnessed a declining contribution of the agricultural sector to GDP in the EU and the USA, where it has fallen below 5 percent of GDP. But this relative decline does not mean that the food supply does not meet demand in this part of the world. In fact, the EU provides financial assistance to farmers to compensate them for low market prices and increased supply.

Major agricultural producing countries export their products to developing countries and elsewhere. But the key issue here is that developing countries, many of which enjoy relative advantages in the agricultural sector, have marginalized their own agricultural production capacity and become importers of wheat, rice, meat and dairy products without even trying to develop existing resources in this vital sector. In the past years, Kuwait has signed agreements with several Asian countries for the production of adequate food supplies, with a view to easing the food crisis in many parts of the world and providing food at affordable prices.

In education, the aid offered by Kuwait and other countries to developing countries has greatly contributed to the development of their education sectors and enhanced their ability to develop qualified human cadres to work in various sectors of the economy.

Development aid also includes healthcare and covers the establishment of hospitals and clinics in various regions of those countries and furnishing them with adequate medical equipment, supplies and medications.

In this context, Kuwait has extended its efforts by forging a medical cooperation agreement with Japan to upgrade the capacities of Kuwaiti medical professionals and enable them to provide

support to developing countries through aid programs. In future, in order to enhance its role in human development and help improve the quality of life in developing countries, Kuwait might focus on education and health care programs.

Kuwait's position on the scale of international aid

As previously mentioned, Kuwait's aid allocations to developing countries has exceeded 1.5 percent of gross national income, which means that the average value of its development aid and support amounts to US$3 billion annually. According to a study by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the combined net official development assistance offered by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE over the past four decades has averaged 1.5 percent of their combined gross national income, a rate much higher than the UN target of 0.7 percent.

The study shows that for the fiscal year ending 31 March 2010, Kuwait's official development assistance financed 23 projects in 23 countries, as follows: 7 in Arab countries, 7 in Africa, 5 in south-east Asia and the Pacific, 3 in Asia and Europe, 1 in Latin America and 1 in the Caribbean.

As a major donor of humanitarian assistance, from 2000 to 2008 Kuwait gave a total of US$221 million, ranking as the fourth highest non-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) contributor for this period.

It could be said that Kuwait's contribution to the economic development of Arab and other developing countries has not been confined to KFAED funds or direct assistance in war and disaster. In many countries direct investments have also played a significant role. Many companies have been established between the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), or its subsidiaries and affiliates, and companies in countries such as Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen and Senegal. The operations of such companies have covered several sectors including investments, banking, agriculture and industry.

Kuwait has also contributed to Arab companies incorporated by resolutions of the Arab League or its subsidiary bodies, in the oil, manufacturing and agriculture sectors. Although KIA's mission is to achieve a clear and appropriate return on funds employed through its various investment tools, whether quoted or otherwise, such investments must also have developmental goals.

Direct investment is intended to lead to the development of key economic sectors in developing countries, such as tourism or manufacturing. This should, in turn, improve sovereign revenues or increase exports in order to provide adequate revenues for the needs of those countries. Investments in vital sectors should create job opportunities for young people. Kuwait has established joint ventures in many developing countries that have enhanced the role of the sectors in which they operate and provided job opportunities to their citizens.

However, it should be taken into consideration that development and humanitarian aid for developing countries requires a thorough understanding of the nature of the political situations in those countries and an assessment of the actual needs of their communities. Therefore, aid institutions in Kuwait should recognize such situations to ensure that the funds that are donated or provided through soft loans or concessionary financing can lift people out of poverty and reduce unemployment rates in those countries. Development finance must improve the quality of life, which is a key Millennium Development Goal.

Achieving such objectives is not an easy task, despite all the funds and technical assistance offered by donor countries, UN agencies and development funds.

Given the size of Kuwait's population, its development activities and its international role have had a significant impact. Kuwait is a small country that had a relatively late economic boom following the discovery of oil. But even during the difficult years, ever since its inception in the mid-eighteenth century, it has always important to note that charity and assistance have had deep roots in the Kuwaiti community.

Monitoring and implementation of finances

How can aid providers and concessionary financiers ensure that Kuwaiti funds provided to developing countries are used in projects that will support sustainable development and improve living conditions in those countries?

While the financial operations of KFAED and other Kuwait-supported funds and institutions include instruments and mechanisms for inviting proposals and following up loan agreements with the relevant authorities in developing countries, direct financial assistance to governments in developing countries may not always operate with such transparency, since it is up to the beneficiary governments to implement such agreements.

Many Western governments and donor agencies have certainly faced problems in relation to the completion of projects, uncertainties about the ultimate use of funds, or deductions for the administrative costs of individuals or entities at the expense of project goals. Uncertainties concerning the use of aid include financial assistance for victims of natural disasters, or those affected by acts of violence, terrorism and civil and regional wars. It might be helpful to promote international cooperation among donor countries in order to ensure proper supervision of the disbursement of funds through legitimate channels, so as to achieve the intended benefits.

The importance of integrating a philosophy of aid into Kuwaiti society

Providing foreign aid undoubtedly faces internal opposition within donor countries. In capitalist countries such as the US, Europe and Japan, some political parties do not accept the idea of their governments offering grants or concessional financing to developing countries. These parties argue that before allocating funds for humanitarian work or development in other countries, more attention should be given to underprivileged groups in their own countries and appropriate services should

be provided to their citizens. Supporting developing countries has therefore become a key issue in political party programs and may even change the course of elections, depending on the prevailing economic conditions in the donor countries and the economic situation at the time of elections.

Fortunately, most people in affluent societies have become aware of the importance of humanitarian assistance and development aid as a key issue in their countries' foreign policies, and consider it part of their humanitarian responsibility towards others. People of wealth and resources have taken it upon themselves to provide billions of dollars to finance education and health care programs, implement fresh water supply projects, or support agricultural development to help achieve food self-sufficiency in developing countries.

In addition, many government officials and businessmen in donor countries believe that aid programs can increase demand for their own products.

In Kuwait, in recent years, voices have been raised in opposition to the philosophy of aid and KFAED's continued provision of concessional funds to developing countries. These groups represent a populist political trend that claims that the government undermines the rights of limited and low-income nationals by offering hundreds of millions of dinars to governments and agencies in other countries. They further claim that all the foreign aid that Kuwait has provided was of no help during the time of the Iraqi invasion, when the governments and peoples of many Arab and developing countries supported the invasion and opposed the liberation efforts led by the international community.

For the record, the government and political leadership of Kuwait do not neglect public welfare, and do not hesitate to provide the necessary funds to implement infrastructure projects or education, health care, and housing programs within Kuwait.

However, it must be admitted that for years Kuwait has suffered from overburdened utilities, roads, and health and educational services, as a result of a population that has increased without a corresponding increase in such facilities and services. Even so, Kuwait's foreign aid is actually less than the funds allocated for domestic projects.

Kuwait does not suffer from a failure to allocate the necessary funds, but rather from poor executive capacity, ineffective government management, and indecisiveness. For this reason, KFAED decided to issue KWD500 million in special bonds for the Savings and Credit Bank over five years; that is, KWD100 million annually. In addition, the Fund allocated 25 percent of its annual net profit for national infrastructure projects.

These resolutions were adopted in 2002 to address the growing demands for housing and economic development including roads, ports, airport and other infrastructure projects.

Hence, it is important to promote in Kuwait a political culture that understands the value of aid and of Kuwait's continuing role as a donor country in a world of overlapping interests. Throughout the centuries, Kuwait has been exposed to numerous risks that have threatened its fate and existence, but it has been able to cope with these risks thanks to its international relations. It will be recalled that during the past fifty years, Kuwait has been exposed to several threats from Iraq. As early as 1961, immediately after Kuwait gained full independence, Abdul-Karim Kassem declared Iraqi sovereignty over Kuwait, claiming that Kuwait had in fact been part of the Ottoman province of Basra before signing the Protection Treaty with Britain in 1899.

Although the government of the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah held deliberations with Britain and the Arab countries, which helped eliminate the Iraqi threat at the time, the regime

that came to power after the fall of Abdul-Karim Kassem was not very friendly. During the reign of the Ba'ath-led government that came to power in July 1968, Iraqi troops attacked the border outpost of Sametah, killing two soldiers in March 1973. This further aggravated the increasingly tense relations between Kuwait and Iraq for a period of time, and led to the closure of their border.

Kuwaiti financial aid and support for Iraq against Iran during the Iran–Iraq war (1980–88) obviously did not pay off. In August 1990, Saddam Hussein ordered his troops to invade and occupy Kuwait and the rest of the story is well known to everyone.

Therefore, the development of political and economic relations and providing aid to eligible countries remain key issues that the Kuwaiti government and political and civil society should emphasize in order to strengthen national security.

The government bears a heavy responsibility for the development of the value of aid and assistance through several mechanisms including the state-owned media in which issues related to development aid and finance and humanitarian assistance may be discussed. Relevant figures and intellectuals may be invited to discuss the subject, provide financial data and explain the socio-economic return for communities in the beneficiary countries. Also, providing the press with access to data on development projects that have been assisted or financed by Kuwait can introduce more people to the rationale for aid and explain the humanitarian motive for Kuwait's engagement in aid activities.

It is also important to integrate basic information on Kuwait's role in development aid and humanitarian assistance into school curricula – particularly in primary schools – as well as in university syllabuses. This will help students understand the values and goals promoted by Kuwait through

the decades, regarding the significance of its participation in development and livelihood improvement efforts in many developing countries.

I personally believe that political opposition to aid in Kuwait will not stop. But it is important to intensify the media spotlight and provide learning materials in primary and university education to help create a broader base of support for Kuwait's long-standing role in providing aid.

What offers hope is the fact that Kuwaitis – men and women – have become increasingly engaged in religious and other charities, expecting nothing in return; in fact, many of them donate money through these institutions to help the poor and needy in many countries.

A host of Kuwaiti names have shone in the past few years in the areas of humanitarian aid, notably the late Chairman of the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society (KRCS), Barjas Hamoud Al-Barjas who harnessed its potential to help many of those affected by natural disasters and war in many countries. KRCS pursued extensive activities in south-east Asia, India, Pakistan and many Arab countries, such as Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Libya and Sudan.

Also, the late Abdulrahman Al-Sumait, a prominent Islamic preacher, has worked extensively to alleviate people's pain and suffering in many African countries through the Direct Aid society. For many years until he passed away, he drilled artesian wells to secure water supplies, offered a wide range of assistance, and helped groups and individuals in several African countries

Conclusion

Having reviewed the various aspects of humanitarian action and development aid, including the philosophical premises, humanitarian responsibilities, mechanisms and effects, it is important to acknowledge that Kuwait has become a leading, globally acclaimed hub for humanitarian aid. As the oil boom gathered pace, successive political administrations maintained a clear vision regarding Kuwait's role in supporting developing countries. It should be noted that even in the 1950s, when Kuwait was suffering from poverty and destitution, and before it began to enjoy massive oil revenues, development aid and financing ran side by side with initiatives to improve livelihoods and provide basic services and facilities within the country.

Those first generations would confirm that the values of aid and assistance to the needy were not new to Kuwait. In the 1930s, Kuwaitis had supported their Palestinian brethren in their revolt against British colonialism and their fight against global Zionist attempts to infiltrate into Palestine. While Kuwaitis have worked hand in hand to secure healthcare and education within their country from the beginning of the last century, they have also been actively engaged in philanthropy abroad.

Hence, development institutions such as the Development Fund, and aid agencies such as the General Authority of the South and the Arabian Gulf, have stepped forward with great enthusiasm to provide financial aid and assistance for Arab and developing countries. The General Authority of the South and the Arabian Gulf has also offered education opportunities and appropriate healthcare services to many people in the Arabian Gulf, Yemen and Sudan, which has boosted their capacity for development and livelihood improvement.

Kuwait has made substantial efforts to support the education of the populations of the Arabian Gulf by offering them scholarships to study in Kuwait or by building schools in their countries. This took place at a time when these countries were still forging their way in economic development and before they gained their independence in the 1970s.

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah played an instrumental role in the renaissance of the Gulf countries following the rise in the level of Kuwaiti aid in the 1960s. After assuming the position of Foreign Minister in 1963, he chaired the Standing Committee to Assist the Arab Gulf States, which was established in 1962 by an Amiri decree issued by the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

The abundance of charities in Kuwait has opened up possibilities for the development of professional aid competencies in many other countries. This positive context for volunteerism has produced informed leaders who are fully aware of the action needed and challenges ahead. However, it should be noted that the political situation and the spread of radical and extremist ideologies in many Arab and Islamic countries has imposed constraints on charity work and the mechanisms of aid financing, as the international community has geared its focus towards the financing of terrorism, violence, and extremist religious groups.

The issue of the acceptance by Kuwaiti society of the concept of aid provided by the government, civil organizations, and individuals is not insurmountable, despite some opposition to the government's allocation of funds to support and finance projects in developing countries, including in the Arab world.

Thanks to the efforts of His Highness Amir Sabah Al-Ahmad, the late ruler of Kuwait, as well as successive governments, major institutions, public and private bodies, civil society organizations, and the distinguished men and women who have offered part of their wealth to lift the peoples of the world out of poverty, ignorance, and disease, Kuwait has deservedly become a center for humanitarian action.

We must work to maintain this elevated status among the humanitarian community. We should develop tools and mechanisms for providing aid and humanitarian assistance and for enhancing the capacity to direct funds into channels that can benefit people in recipient countries. We should maintain close communication with international agencies, especially the United Nations, in order to improve the efficiency of aid mechanisms for the benefit of all mankind.

Chapter III

Kuwait's Contribution to the Promotion of Culture in the Arab World

Kuwait's Contribution to the Promotion of Culture in the Arab World

Mohammed Mahmoud Harbi(*)

The United Nations' honoring of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a 'humanitarian leader' and the designation of Kuwait as a 'global humanitarian hub' on 9 September 2014 at the UN headquarters, offered a perfect opportunity to highlight the humanitarian role of Kuwait and the Amir, in particular, and the distinctive developmental role of the State of Kuwait and its rulers, governments and people, in general.

Soft power

It can be said that throughout its history, Kuwait has used its soft power in the political, economic, humanitarian and cultural domains in the service of humanity.

(*) Mohammed Mahmoud Harbi holds a BSc in Physics, Cairo University (1973), a diploma in International Politics, Faculty of Economics and Political Science, Cairo University (1992). He is Media Consultant for the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters. He was Editor-in-Chief for several sessions of the Qurain Cultural Festival magazine, columnist at the Kuwaiti Qabas and Egyptian Al-Masry Al-Youm newspapers, co-editor of the Bidoun Raqeeb TV show by Youssef Al-Jassim and Editor of Radio Kuwait's Muntada Al-Sa'a show. He has published several Arabic language books including Jassem Al-Qattami: Arabism, Democracy and Human Rights (Alumni Association, 2012), Jassem Al-Qattami and the Jamal Abdel-Nasser Award (2001), and Dialogues on the Edge of a Dream (1996).

Soft power is essentially a moral and spiritual power that entails a range of ethical values and principles that are manifested in the promotion of infrastructure projects, culture, arts, media and politics. It is also a means used by states to boost foreign relations, serve the peoples of other countries, and bring happiness to mankind.

That said, while Kuwait has used its soft power in many areas, it has followed a clearly defined institutional form following Sabah Al-Ahmad's establishment of a diplomatic school upon his assignment as Foreign Minister. The impact of this initiative has spread out from Kuwait, this small country in the north of the Arabian Gulf, to the entire world, both east and west.

The following pages focus particularly on soft power in the cultural domain, on Kuwait's contributions to Arab cultural development, and on His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's role in this context since his assumption of responsibilities within the system of the modern state.

Partnership

Ever since the foundation of modern Kuwait its people have had a long-standing connection with the Sabah family. Throughout its modern history, various incidents have demonstrated the power of this connection; hence, the strength of Kuwait's humanity role in various fields may be attributed to the integrated system of giving adopted by both the people and the ruling family, who cannot be separated in any way.

The role of His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad in his country's philanthropic march and its practice of soft power derives from a view expressed by the rulers of modern Kuwait that the development of the country was intricately linked both to its nationalist and its humanitarian stand-

points Seeking to establish such a role, His Highness worked tirelessly in various ways, together with members of the ruling family, to earn Kuwait a place among those countries that are actively involved in human development.

As part of his responsibilities as a member of the royal family, and as a son of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber who witnessed the launch of modern Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad is a key partner in the government of the state. His early interest in politics, in his twenties, was strongly reinforced when he became Foreign Minister and began to establish Kuwait's role in the service of humanity, using soft power on the regional and Arab stage, including the medium of culture.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's role in Kuwait's distinctive humanitarian activities – along with successive governments, leading Kuwaiti figures, and the public, private and non-profit organizations that have all contributed greatly to an integrated approach – has been a key factor in strengthening Kuwait's global role and its modern renaissance.

Responsibilities

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad has been a central partner in government ever since 1954, when the former Amir, Abdullah Al-Salem, appointed him as a member of the Supreme Executive Committee charged with regulating operations within governmental departments and developing plans for their activities.

He was subsequently appointed as head of the Social Affairs and Labor Department and, in 1957, of the Press and Publications Department. Both departments served as launch pads for Kuwait's contributions to arts and culture and the formation of institutional foundations for human development through the promotion of arts and culture, nationally or internationally, by means of various instruments and mechanisms.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad continued the march of the young forward-looking nation under the leadership of the Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem, whose visionary ideas helped to lay the first building blocks for the modern state.

After Kuwait gained its independence in June 1961, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad became head of the Press and Publications and the Social Affairs and Labor Departments, Member of the Supreme Council, and Member of the Constituent Assembly which drafted the Kuwaiti Constitution.

He became the first Minister of Guidance and Information in the first post-independence government, and was then appointed Foreign Minister in the second ministerial reshuffle in February 1963, as well as Chairman of the Standing Committee of Arabian Gulf Aids.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad continued to be a key member of government and participated in making critical decisions; hence he played a significant and clearly defined role in supporting Kuwait at different levels.

Civil activity

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad has always taken a keen interest in cultural, educational and social activities. In the early 1950s, before assuming public office, he was Honorary President of the Teachers' Club. He also helped establish *Al-Ra'ed* magazine. His interest in education and culture in Kuwait was clearly manifested at an early stage, including chairing an important seminar on education affairs. In addition to his well-known role in the diplomatic arena and his support of Kuwaiti aid to Arab countries, which have already been mentioned in earlier chapters, he has been a patron of the literacy programme launched by the Kuwait Teachers Society and received its team at his home.

Social affairs and the media

When His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad took charge of the Social Affairs and Labour Department, he set his eyes on supporting and culturally and intellectually rehabilitating the youth of Kuwait, who represent half of the present and all of the future. It is their strong arms that will carry Kuwait's message and help in its development in all fields.

Naturally, His Highness relied on a group of enlightened Kuwaitis to implement the Department's policies.

During that period, a number of cultural and sporting institutions were established in order to benefit from the potential of Kuwaiti youth. This led to the emergence of a leading theatrical movement in the Gulf region. A folklore centre was also established in an attempt to preserve the Kuwaiti heritage. In addition to the upgrading of sports clubs, sport has gained a remarkable position, especially on the Arab and Asian stages.

When Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad assumed his duties at the Press and Publications Department, he was mindful of the importance of publishing and the media to Kuwait's development project, on the one hand, and to the role it sought to play in promoting culture throughout the Arab world, on the other. He was also well aware of the importance of culture as a project in which Kuwait was committed to excellence. Therefore, his primary concerns were the establishment of a government printing press to respond to the needs of public institutions, especially the Education Department. He also sent Kuwaiti students abroad to receive training in graphic arts. The Department has also focused on the revival of Arabic heritage through the publication and authentication of old manuscripts.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad recognized the importance of culture in Kuwaiti society, as well as the importance of the role it could play in promoting culture abroad by making resources available

to Arab citizens, which was one of Kuwait's most important early contributions to culture, arts and thought.

Conscious of the importance of documenting history, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad was keen to set up a committee headed by the great Arab historian Dr Ahmed Mustafa Abu Hakima in order to write the history of Kuwait.

Modern Arab cultural history recalls a landmark cultural achievement made by Kuwait towards Arab cultural development, namely the launch in 1958 of *Al-Arabi* magazine, Kuwait's cultural ambassador to its Arab nation, under the direct guidance of His Highness Sheikh Sabah when he headed the Press and Publications Department.

Kuwait's cultural mission

In fact, when describing Kuwait's role in the promotion of culture in the Arab world, we should highlight the unique way in which it proved that culture transcends ideological borders. Thanks to this exceptional approach, Kuwait has become a beacon of light in the Arab world. This approach is based on a genuine and deep cultural consciousness of the fact that culture must serve as a linchpin in any common Arab action. Kuwait's decision to earmark a large portion of its national income to support other communities in the field of culture demonstrated the way that it identified culture and enlightenment as the themes of its distinctive political mission.

Through its consistent cultural policy, Kuwait has become one of the most active Arab contributors to Arab development in general, from sharing in the establishment of institutes and universities to building cultural centers and supporting Arab cultural institutions.

Kuwait has made a wide range of contributions to Arab culture, both through serious, economically-priced cultural publications that reached the farthest geographical points, and through

fostering scientific research via institutions such as the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), which offers valuable awards to outstanding scientific projects by Arab researchers and scientists. The importance of such remarkable achievements was recognized by the Arab public and intellectuals even before the Kuwaiti people, noting that His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad has been a key partner in every instance.

Kuwait's cultural role in the Arab world has been associated with Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, whether directly – as part of the government that completed those projects – or by means of instructions from the Foreign Ministry. This support continued when His Highness became Prime Minister, then Amir of the State of Kuwait.

To its credit, the Kuwaiti cultural project has remained completely out of the ideological and political factors that have caused other projects to fail.

The Kuwaiti state has established a tradition that rested on a high ceiling of freedom to hold opinions without interference. Since the 1950s, Kuwait has hosted many conferences that have brought hundreds of Arab writers together to discuss intellectual issues, free of any interference in the work of the committees, whether their discourses or their recommendations. In fact, many of the conferences have addressed critically sensitive issues without any blame or reproach from any branch of the state.

It should be noted that Kuwait's cultural role as a soft power has not been confined to government or other state institutions. It has also extended to civil and individual humanitarian initiatives undertaken by the people of Kuwait over a long period of time, including outstanding intellectual contributions by numerous intellectuals who laid the foundations of creative cultural activities that have made of Kuwait a permanent center of cultural radiance.

It appears, upon tracing the history of Kuwait, that education and enlightened culture have constituted a defining feature of Kuwaiti identity, in addition to an openness to the world, the maintenance of alliances and friendly relations, and the establishment of a good reputation. These features derive from the trade-oriented nature of the Kuwaiti personality which led from the development of economic ties to a constant quest to earn Kuwait a prime position as a major exporter of Arab culture.

One important political factor has definitely had a dramatic impact in the cultural domain, namely democratic governance. Kuwaitis have come to a virgin land and chosen for themselves an appropriate system of government based on inquiry and independence of the judiciary system. It is only natural for such a context of freedom and democracy to embrace creativity and cultural development.

As early as 1955, Kuwait was exposed to a significant cultural trend known as 'cultural seasons', based around an elite group of prominent Arab intellectuals of both sexes, in various disciplines. These seasons, which ended with the fifth season in 1959, provided an opportunity to introduce Arab cultural representatives to Kuwait, and to introduce Kuwaitis to the views and ideas of the Arab cultural elite, so as to enrich Kuwait's cultural life.

In December 1958, Kuwait hosted the Fourth Arab Writers Conference with the participation of delegations from sixteen Arab countries. Even before the country had achieved its independence, by hosting this conference – following Cairo, Damascus and Beirut – Kuwait took a leading position in the Arab cultural space, which was consolidated later when Kuwait earned its independence.

We should now shed light on some of the great Arab cultural projects that have been launched in Kuwait, within the context of its cultural role, and in which His Highness the Amir has played a key role.

Sabah Al-Ahmad and *Al-Arabi* magazine

December 1958 was a milestone in the history of Kuwaiti culture. It was the month that witnessed the first issue of *Al-Arabi* magazine, which was viewed as Kuwait's cultural ambassador to the world even before its independence. *Al-Arabi* was envisioned as a cultural mouthpiece for purely Arab writers, which addressed the entire Arab nation and was free from political, religious and racial influences; a magazine for all Arabs.

The first editorial, 'Talk of the Month', pointed out that 'If all the Arab countries were to sit around the table to discuss in detail what they have offered to Arabism, Kuwait's small face would rejoice at its deeds.'

The idea of launching *Al-Arabi* 'was a dream for lovers of Arab culture in Kuwait and a reflection of their wish to belong to a wider Arab community that included their present just as it had defined their past. And this dream developed into a comprehensive cultural publication that is published in Kuwait but which lives in every Arab home,' said Dr Suleiman Al-Askari, former Editor-in-Chief.

The idea was born when the Government of Kuwait felt the need for a public department to handle the state's publication needs and to issue Kuwait's official gazette, *Al-Kuwait Al-Yawm* (Kuwait Today). Hence, the Press and Publications Department was created and headed by His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, who hailed the idea of publishing a literary magazine when it was proposed.

The Kuwaiti Government of the time deemed it appropriate to fill the void in the Arab cultural arena after several cultural magazines had gone out of print, but in a manner different from some other countries which generally used such publications for publicity. The Department's decision was to avoid using *Al-Arabi* as a tool for advertising or the promotion of unenlightened ideas.

According to Mr Bader Al-Khalid, Director of the Press and Publications Department, 'the democratic climate that prevailed in Kuwait and the adoption of *shura* (consultation) and participation in the running of State affairs, led government officials to accept this approach.'

Under the guidance of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, the great poet Ahmad Al-Saqqaf, the Deputy Director, went to Baghdad, Beirut and Cairo to choose the Editor-in-Chief and to identify and purchase an archive for the magazine. It was agreed with Dr Ahmad Zaki, the former President of Cairo University, to be the first Editor-in-Chief of the magazine. It was also agreed to establish a strong archive by obtaining a copy of the archives of the Egyptian *Al-Hilal* (The Crescent) magazine, which was the Arab magazine with the largest circulation at that time.

Al-Arabi was launched on 1 December 1958 as an Arab–Kuwaiti publication that presented the different shades of Arab culture, including science, to readers throughout the Arab world. The magazine has continued to this day, ceasing only during the Iraqi invasion.

Al-Arabi developed and began to publish several other publications, namely *Al-Arabi Al-Sagheer*, *Al-Arabi Al-'Ilmi* and *Kitab Al-Arabi*. The latter has systematically documented the writings of the Arab elite and has become the crown jewel among Arab cultural publications, being distributed extensively at a very low price, even less than daily newspapers in some Arab countries. It has received numerous awards, including the Sultan Bin Ali Al Owais Cultural Foundation's 7th Cultural and Scientific Achievement Award (2001–02).

On its silver jubilee in January 1984, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, the Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Minister of Information, sent the following message to the magazine: 'Inspired by Kuwait's belonging to the Arab nation and its desire to establish the country's policy of promoting Arab thought and culture, *Al-Arabi* magazine was first published twenty-five years ago.

Those who have followed the magazine closely will have seen that its Arab orientation represents a cultural identity that is accessible to Arab readers from the Atlantic to the Arabian Gulf.' His Highness added that 'Kuwait does not just export oil, but rather seeks to deploy its oil revenues in development-oriented projects. *Al-Arabi* sets a perfect example of this cultural developmental investment; it is a magazine for every Arab in every Arab land.'

This was an irrefutable sign of His Highness' keenness to foster Kuwait's developmental role by promoting culture both within Kuwait and across the Arab world.

The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL)

In his preface to Dr Sulaiman Al-Askari's book *Kuwait and Cultural Development*, the former Minister of Information and Chairman of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), the late Sheikh Saud Al-Sabah, pointed out that 'the inception of the NCCAL is a national imperative and marks the beginning of a new phase in which the state bears a responsibility for cultural development. State patronage of culture and intellectuals has been an essential feature of modern Kuwait, and has never been subject to casual concerns or exceptional circumstances. In fact, it has reached out beyond Kuwait to Arab intellectuals wherever they are.'

The establishment of the NCCAL reflected such a conviction regarding Kuwait's cultural role. On 17 July 1973, a historic decree established the NCCAL, with the following objectives in Article (2): 'The Council shall be dedicated to culture, arts and letters and operate in these areas to develop and enrich intellectual production, create a conducive environment for artistic and literary production, find the best means to disseminate culture, preserve and study heritage, seek to promote appreciation of culture and fine arts, maintain strong ties with Arab and foreign cultural institutions, and develop a cultural plan based on national needs.'

The NCCAL ranks highly among major cultural institutions in the Arab world and has, ever since its inception, played a central role in cultural planning and development. Its greatest and most important role probably rests on two main themes: publishing, and the stimulation of cultural and artistic life.

Publishing has focused on serious cultural and intellectual publications, chiefly *'Alam Al-Ma'rifa* (World of Knowledge) series which was launched in 1978 and was hailed by many Arab intellectuals as the crown jewel among the Arabic press. The Council has also issued *'Alam Al-Fikr* (World of Thought), *Al-Thaqafa Al-'Alamiyya* (Global Culture), and *Jaridat Al-Funun* (Arts Journal) magazines, in addition to the *Ibda'at 'Alamiya* (Global Creations) and *Al-Masrah Al-'Alami* (Global Theatre) series.

The Council's publications constitute a key vehicle for conveying Kuwait's cultural message to the Arab world, with their variety of serious topics, low price, and most importantly their great range of Arab intellectuals and creative writers chosen only for the quality of their work.

Stimulating cultural life

The stimulation of cultural life has been manifested through the great number of festivals, seminars and cultural weeks held within Kuwait and abroad.

In this context, Kuwait was keen to establish an annual international book fair, which has now become a key feature of its cultural role. The Kuwait Book Fair is the third largest Arab book fair, after Cairo and Beirut.

Festivals and seminars also contribute significantly to Arab and global communication by means of the experts, artists and intellectuals that Kuwait brings together from around the world to take part, including the Qurain Festival which His Highness sponsored during his tenure as Prime Minister.

A comprehensive plan for Arab culture

One cannot talk about the development of Arab culture without mentioning the landmark Comprehensive Plan for Arab Culture, which was adopted by the Amir, the Government and cultural institutions, chiefly the NCCAL. Kuwait's keen interest in the various forms of Arab culture has been clearly manifested not only by hosting the activities of the plan, but also through Kuwait's leaders' patronage of and personal interest in this giant project. The former Amir, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad, his Crown Prince, the Prime Minister and all other ministers led by the Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, were keen to receive the Arab members of the Plan's Committee before the start of the meetings. The Committee included eminent Arab intellectuals headed by Dr Abdulaziz Hussein. The late Dr Shaker Moustafa, a leading Arab intellectual from Syria, was the Committee's rapporteur. Kuwait provided the Committee with premises as well as with many other facilities via the NCCAL, whose Secretary-General at the time was the late poet Ahmed Meshari Al-Adwani.

The Committee defined for itself a set of goals relating to the development of intellectual foundations, on the basis that culture is the most important pillar of civilization, and with an emphasis on Arab cultural identity. They also identified ways and means of comprehensive cultural planning, harnessing human potential and expertise, financing cultural projects and the legislation necessary for cultural development and all that helps to achieve cultural integration at national and international levels, while expanding the range of interaction with the cultures of the world, including both developing and developed nations.

This took much time and effort but it was only the beginning. A precise and extensive programme was developed, based a series of seminars that would discuss and study various areas identified by the Committee. These areas were divided into ten themes including a range of topics of particular relevance to cultural planning. During the period from mid-October 1982 to June 1984, 27 seminars were held in Kuwait, each of which discussed a certain theme over two days through a number of papers and studies. Hence, more than 70 papers were discussed, with over 600 intellectuals, specialists, writers and artists from all over the Arab world taking part. The papers were

published along with the story of the Committee's inception and an in-depth analysis of the major outcomes and recommendations in six elegant, lavish, large-format volumes. Under Kuwait's supervision, six thousand copies of this great work were published in 1986, and were presented to Arab cultural institutions, research centres and universities.

The Committee stated that it owed 'the Amir, Crown Prince, Government and people of Kuwait deep thanks for their financial and moral support'.

The Comprehensive Plan for Arab Culture was an unprecedented achievement that served as a guide for official and popular cultural institutions.

In keeping with its continued role in the development of the plan, and in response to the decision of the Arab Ministers of Culture in November 2006, Kuwait hosted a meeting of Arab experts to upgrade the plan, on 26-28 August 2008, in coordination with the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO). Since that date, Kuwait has been involved in all committees assigned with the process of updating the plan.

The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS)

The patronage of science cannot be separated from Kuwait's strategy of support for cultural development in the Arab world, a strategy that bore its first fruits with the launch of *Al-Arabi* magazine whose first editor-in-chief was, besides his encyclopedic cultural knowledge, an established scientist who promoted simplified science throughout the pages of the magazine from its earliest issues. But Kuwait later decided to express its support for science directly by establishing an institution especially for that purpose, the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).

In his introduction to the KFAS Strategic Plan (2012–16), Dr Adnan Shihab-Eldin said, 'Since its inception, the State of Kuwait – its leadership, Government and people – has consistently appre-

ciated and given high priority to science and education, even back in the times of economic hardship and scarce resources. After the discovery of oil, Kuwait's wealth increased substantially and so did its interest in science and education.'

He added that 'While it takes great pride in its achievements and contributions spanning thirty-five years, KFAS always strives to improve the efficiency of its work and to gear its activities towards the varied priorities of economic and scientific development within available resources. Therefore, in 2010, under the guidance of HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, Amir of Kuwait and Chairman of KFAS' board, and with the assistance of international consultants and local experts, KFAS began to develop a new strategic plan. It was designed to enable KFAS to pursue its activities and achieve its noble mission of stimulating, supporting and developing human capacities, as well as promoting initiatives that contribute to building a solid foundation for science, technology and creativity.'

KFAS is a private, non-profit organization established by an Amiri Decree issued on 12 December 1976. Its Board of Directors is chaired by HH the Amir of the State of Kuwait. KFAS receives financial contributions by Kuwaiti Shareholding Companies (KSC), amounting to one percent of their net annual profit.

The Foundation aims to:

1 – Promote scientific research within the various disciplines of basic and applied sciences by offering research grants;
2 – Offer grants, awards and prizes to promote intellectual development within Kuwait and other Arab countries;
3 – Encourage, support and develop joint research projects and scientific programmes among Kuwaiti scientific institutions, on the one hand, and Arab and international scientific institutions, on the other, and grant incentive awards to researchers, authors and translators in various scientific fields.

KFAS was established as an initiative by the late Amir, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah – God rest his soul – when he was Crown Prince and Prime Minister, and with the support and contribution of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Kuwait.

KFAS offers a range of prizes annually to promote scientific research in Kuwait and other Arab and Islamic countries, including:

The Kuwait Prize

KFAS' major prize, awarded to outstanding scientists and researchers. Five prizes are awarded annually to Kuwaiti nationals and five to citizens of Arab countries, in the following five fields: basic sciences, applied sciences, economic and social sciences, arts and letters, and the revival of Arab and Islamic scientific heritage. Each prize is worth KWD30,000.

The Kuwait Prize has helped many Arab scholars and researchers to advance the state of research where they worked and encouraged them to continue to work on scientific production for the benefit of the development of the Arab peoples, and humanity in general.

The Scientific Production Prize

This prize honors distinguished Kuwaitis holding a doctorate degree in various disciplines. Each prize is worth KWD10,000.

The KFAS Merit Award

It is granted annually to those who have made outstanding scientific and intellectual contributions in various fields of knowledge and offered valuable services to the State of Kuwait. It is worth KWD30,000.

According to KFAS statistics, the prizes were launched in 1979 with a view to promote Arab scientific production in general, as part of Kuwait's contribution to the Arab scientific renaissance, and encourage Arab scientists within the Arab countries and beyond.

Through these awards, KFAS seeks to establish links between researchers in Kuwait, to achieve benefits, transfer know-how, and build a strong scientific base.

The Kuwait e-Award

This award was launched under the auspices of HH the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to encourage creativity in information technology. KFAS has allocated cash prizes amounting to KWD50,000 for each category. The award is accredited within Kuwait by the World Summit Award (WSA) and globally by the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID).

According to the cooperation agreement signed between the two awards, the Kuwait e-Award winner projects officially represent Kuwait in international competitions. The first season was launched in 2008–09.

In addition, two prizes are offered by the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences (IOMS), awards used to be made to authors and translators at the Kuwait Book Fair (until 2012), as well as agricultural awards, and awards for the best research.

The Foundation's fulfillment of its mission may be attributed to the great attention given by HH the Amir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad to these awards, and his efforts to develop them in order to achieve optimal benefits for Arab scientists and researchers and their counterparts in Kuwait.

HH the Amir is always keen to receive the winners who come to Kuwait to receive the awards, at the annual ceremony which takes place at KFAS.

The scientific dimension of international cooperation

Reports show that HH the Amir has devoted much attention to the scientific dimension of global cooperation, and shown continued interest in establishing scientific relations with developed countries. He has engaged young Kuwaiti scientists in programmes adopted by research centers and universities with the aim of establishing a Kuwaiti advanced scientific platform, using diplomatic channels to highlight the role of Kuwaiti scientists in international forums, and establishing giant scientific projects in Kuwait, such as solar energy initiatives. HH the Amir has also been keen personally to honor Arab scientists and has attended award ceremonies.

With a view to improving the Foundation's performance, in 2007 Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad set up the Supreme Committee for the Development of Scientific Research in Kuwait to review the organization and performance of R&D operations and make recommendations for the restructuring and development of science, technology and innovation in Kuwait. The Committee subsequently submitted its recommendations.

In 2009, as part of efforts to improve performance and evaluation, KFAS developed a new strategic plan to modify the vision and mission, and to identify the main objectives of the strategy and the expected results. The plan included four main objectives:

1 – To contribute to the development and dissemination of science and learning, support the gifted and talented, support the development of scientific culture, and foster a conducive environment in the State of Kuwait;
2 – To support scientific research capacity in national scientific institutions, and promote cooperation and integration among them;
3 – To foster innovation and help establish links to support commercial applications of science and technology;
4 – To stimulate the development of the private sector's science and technology capacity, and share in building a knowledge-based economy.

KFAS publications

In 1982, the Authorship, Translation and Publishing Division of KFAS began to issue a series of unique publications including books, encyclopedias and specialized studies, to promote the revival of Arabic in the field of science and to support the movement for scientific Arabization in the Arab world.

Majallat Al-'Oloom (Science Magazine), the Arabic edition of *Scientific American* magazine, which is published in several languages, aims to spread scientific knowledge in the Arab world as part of Kuwait's mission to open fields of education and disseminate knowledge among Arab citizens as well as school and university students.

Al-Taqaddum Al-'Ilmi (Scientific Advancement) magazine publishes articles reflecting the importance of scientific progress as an integral part of the Foundation's mission.

Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah (DAI)

By honoring Islamic treasures throughout the ages and showcasing the arts of this great civilization, Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah is a perfect example of the promotion of Kuwait's cultural message to the world. HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad directly supports DAI, particularly its touring exihibitions, which bear the message of peace and love from Kuwait to the people of the world.

DAI has a public–private legal structure. The main element is the priceless Sabah Collection, one of the rarest and most important collections of Islamic art in the world. It belongs to Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad and his spouse and the Director-General of DAI, Sheikha Hussa Sabah Al-Salem. The collection represents an exquisite artistic panorama of life throughout various Islamic

eras, with around 30,000 masterpieces of pottery, carpets and weapons that have been collected by Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad from all over the world.

The owners of the collection continue to nurture its development, ensuring that all media and techniques are covered. As such, the collection now spans the full geographic and chronological range of the Islamic world, from Spain to China, and from the first to the thirteenth centuries AH (seventh to nineteenth centuries AD).

In collaboration with the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), DAI organizes a diverse and distinctive annual Cultural Season, inviting guests from around the world to discuss artistic and cultural issues. The programmes are held mainly in English for the benefit of the largest segment of foreigners in Kuwait, including ambassadors and experts, with a view to conveying Kuwait's cultural message and highlighting its contribution to Islamic civilization.

DAI also seeks, by means of the Cultural Seasons, to showcase Kuwait's own heritage arts and introduce them to Arabs and foreign residents.

After the devastation of the Kuwait National Museum, during the Iraqi invasion, DAI's new headquarters were opened at the Amricani Hospital, under the patronage and in the presence of HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad.

DAI has also funded Islamic archeological excavations in Bahnasa village in Upper Egypt, and a Kuwaiti–Egyptian mission to trace Islamic trade routes in the Sinai.

'Treasury of the World'

DAI also made a unique contribution to efforts to showcase the arts of Islamic civilization, through a traveling exhibition entitled 'Treasury of the World: Jewelled Arts of India in the Age of the Mughals'. Among the richest and best known of the exhibitions that have been curated by DAI, it introduced the world to the treasures of human civilization.

The exhibition, which featured more than five hundred exquisite pieces of inlaid jewellery dating back to the Indian Mughal dynasty, toured the world for almost a decade before returning to Kuwait. It was inaugurated at the British Museum in London on 16 May 2001, then travelled to the United States where it was shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Cleveland Museum of Art in Ohio, the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas, and the Saint Louis Art Museum in Missouri. It then moved from the United States to Europe, where it toured the Palacio Real in Madrid, Spain, the Museum of Islamic Art and the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin, Germany, the Louvre in Paris, and the Moscow Kremlin and State Hermitage Museums in Russia. Lastly it toured Asia, where it visited the Asian Civilisations Museum in Singapore and ended in December 2010 with the Islamic Arts Museum in Malaysia.

Private institutional patronage

Kuwait's cultural contributions to the Arab nation have not been limited to public institutions. Individual initiatives have also played a central role. Kuwaiti philanthropy has generally been marked by diversity as it has included both civil and public institutions operating under the patronage of HH the Amir as part of Kuwait's cultural mission.

Among the institutions that have played a prominent role in conveying Kuwait's cultural message to the Arab nation are the Foundation of Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain's Prize for Poetic Creativity, and the Souad Al-Sabah Publishing and Distribution House.

Foundation of Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain's Prize for Poetic Creativity

The Foundation was established in Cairo in 1989 by the poet Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain, who announced at the Abu Tammam al-Taei Session award ceremony in Marrakech in October 2014, marking the Foundation's silver jubilee, that Cairo – as the capital of culture, art and beauty – had been specially selected as the venue to launch the Foundation.

The Foundation is focused primarily on enriching and developing the Arabic poetry movement with a view to restoring its status in Arab hearts as 'the register of the Arabs' (*Diwan Al-'Arab*). The Foundation's mission covers various areas, notably:

- Annual awards for the best poem, best poetry collection, and best critical book;
- Honoring Arab writers in the fields of poetry writing and criticism;
- Celebrating eminent Arab and foreign poets through the Foundation's sessions;
- Holding a Poetry Festival in Kuwait in March each year, beginning in 2008, to commemorate two Arab poets for their cultural and literary contributions;
- Under the guidance of its Founder, the poet Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain, the Foundation has established a series of awards in the fields of poetry and literature;
- The Al-Babtain Central Library for Arabic Poetry in Kuwait was established as a gift from the Foundation on the occasion of Kuwait's selection as Capital of Arab Culture. In April 2006, it was inaugurated under the patronage of HH the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah;

- Al-Babtain's Center for Dialogue among Civilizations organizes training courses in Arabic linguistics and tour-guiding in collaboration with foreign universities. In 2012, the Euro Arab Institute for Dialogue between Cultures was established at the University of Rome, in order to promote dialogue between cultures, civilizations and religions.

Souad Al-Sabah Publishing and Distribution House

The Souad Al-Sabah Publishing House is a private company founded by the poet Dr Souad Al-Sabah to promote Arab creativity everywhere, as an essential part of Kuwait's cultural message to the Arab nation.

Established in Cairo in 1988, the company has faced major challenges but has managed to make remarkable contributions despite the circumstances in which it was born. It has published classic and contemporary books, striking a balance between the masterpieces of the past and modern works of lasting value. In 1984, Dr Al-Sabah republished the 1020 issues of the Egyptian *Al-Risala* magazine that had ceased publication in 1953.

The publishing house has also held competitions, nurturing young writers and introducing them to readers. As a mark of respect, Dr Souad Al-Sabah named the competitions after her late husband, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, along with her own name. The competitions represent a unique approach to promoting creativity, as they are dedicated to young Arab writers below the age of thirty.

The publishing house has given great attention to children's culture by cooperating with the Kuwait Society for the Advancement of Arab Children (KSAAC) in the publication of research and studies, as well as a large number of children's story books and other publications.

In late 1991, the publishing house began to take a new turn by moving gradually to Kuwait. By early 1994, the move was complete and the publishing house sought to honor early creative writers from across the Arab world.

In this way, non-governmental cultural institutions complement Kuwait's official cultural role, both within Kuwait or abroad, as part of its mission to promote culture beyond its borders within the context of its major role in supporting cultural development in the Arab region and the wider world.

References

- د. العسكري، سليمان «الكويت والتنمية الثقافية العربية مسيرة المجلس الوطني للثقافة والفنون والآداب في ربع قرن 1998».
- إسهامات الكويت في التنمية الثقافية العربية، «ندوة أقيمت بالتعاون مع المنظمة العربية للتربية والثقافة والعلوم أكتوبر 2002» / الناشر المجلس الوطني للثقافة والفنون والآداب 2005.
- التنمية والثقافة «ندوة مهرجان القرين الثقافي الرابع عشر 2007» / الناشر المجلس الوطني للثقافة والفنون والآداب 2010.
- سمو الشيخ صباح الأحمد الجابر الصباح عزيمة وبناء، مركز البحوث والدراسات الكويتية 2004.
- د. العسكري، سليمان «العربي مسيرة مجلة» / وزارة الإعلام الكويت 2003.
- ابن منصور، «غراب العيد، الكويت والثقافة العربية» / دار سعاد الصباح 2001.
- حربي، محمود «على حافة الحلم، حوارات» / 1998.
- الخطة الاستراتيجية لتطوير أداء المجلس الوطني للثقافة والفنون والآداب / الكويت 2014.
- موجز أعمال مؤسسة الكويت للتقدم العلمي / أعوام مختلفة.
- د. الوقيان، خليفة «الثقافة في الكويت بواكير اتجاهات ريادات ج1، ج2» / 2010.
- «سنوات من العطاء»، مؤسسة جائزة عبدالعزيز سعود البابطين للإبداع الشعري، / الكويت 2012.