



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



Message from
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Minister of State for Middle East and North Africa, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

In 2021, Kuwait celebrated two important anniversaries: 60 years since independence and 30 years since liberation. These occasions are moments to reflect on the strength and depth of our bilateral relationship, given the role the UK played handing over power in 1961, and in the Allied operation in 1991. For over 120 years, the UK and Kuwait have stood shoulder to shoulder as dependable friends, working together to maintain security and stability in the region. Our partnership continues, whether on threats to global health, climate and sustainability, economic recovery, or defence and security. Our armed forces will continue to work side by side, deploying together on training exercises.

We enjoy strong and growing bilateral trading links. Goods and services trade between the UK and Kuwait currently totals around £2.2 billion per year and we have agreed to work together to facilitate greater market access in key sectors, such as professional and business services, agriculture, education, healthcare, financial services and renewable energy. We recently launched a public consultation, and we hope 2022 will see the start of trade negotiations. This will help us to deepen and strengthen trade and investment with both Kuwait and our friends across the Gulf Cooperation Council. We share the desire to

make swift progress in realising the opportunities that this represents.

The power of our partnership was evident in Kuwait's efforts to mediate and bring an end to the Gulf dispute that was resolved in January this year. The UK supported Kuwait, and maintained our strong links with all parties, bringing our diplomatic network to bear, as we encouraged our friends in the Gulf to follow the path towards full reconciliation. We welcomed the leadership of the late Amir HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, his successor HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jabir Al-Sabah, and the diplomatic efforts of Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmed Al-Nasser Al-Sabah.

I felt the depth of our relationship myself when I visited Kuwait for the first time as a Minister in May 2021. I received an extremely warm welcome, and was delighted to meet in person with my dear friend, His Excellency Majdi Al-Dhafiri, Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister. We were able to follow up these discussions when I welcomed him to London earlier in December. Every occasion that we talk allows us to have open, honest and candid discussions, as partners. The Foreign Secretary maintains an ever closer relationship with His Excellency Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, and was pleased to host him with other GCC Foreign Ministers at

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Chevening in December. When I was in Kuwait I was also delighted to meet entrepreneurs, women passionate about playing a greater role in society, and the world, and business leaders. Taken together they represent much of what I see as the future of our relationship with Kuwait.

The shared agenda of our two nations is evident, none more so than the cooperation we have displayed in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic. Kuwait, like the UK, made a significant contribution to the COVAX facility (US\$50m). Our task is now to build back better, guaranteeing our ability to open up the world’s economies for trade, travel and tourism.

Another area of close cooperation is human rights, democracy, and good governance. We are encouraged by the Kuwaiti government’s positive steps in these areas, including introducing legislation to prosecute domestic violence, providing shelters for domestic workers and tackling human trafficking by cracking down on visa traders. The developments from the National Dialogue were welcomed steps. In addition, project work is underway, in partnership with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, to encourage more Kuwaiti

women to get more politically active and equip them to pursue their political aspirations through mentoring and strategic campaign training. On all of these issues, the UK is ready, as ever, to offer our world-leading expertise.

The UK is taking safe and careful measures to open up once more to welcome Kuwaitis to our shores, be it for business or pleasure. I am delighted to see the growing numbers of Kuwaiti students investing in their future by studying in the UK, and I welcome them to our world-class universities.

Through our biannual Joint Steering Group meetings, we continue to find new areas to expand our cooperation. I look forward to travelling to Kuwait in 2022 to co-host the 18th edition of the UK-Kuwait Joint Steering Group. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary attach great importance to our relationship with our Gulf partners, and have a strong desire to travel to the region in 2022. I have no doubt that our friendship will continue to endure and grow in the years ahead. I wish Kuwait, HH the Amir and all our Kuwaiti friends every success as they celebrate these most significant anniversaries. E



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