



## A record of continuing progress

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In a statement issued on the eve of the Arab summit on Doha, Qatar, in March 2009, President Sheikh Khalifa expressed the hope that the Iranian leadership would respond to "our demand and put things right by restoring the UAE sovereignty over the three islands."

"After all, we are not requesting something impossible, but we are calling for legitimacy with regards to our three islands Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb," he said, reiterating that the UAE would accept any ruling made by the International Court of Justice on the issue, whatever it might be.

At an Arab level, the UAE takes part in all summits and ministerial gatherings, believing that such meetings contribute to a strengthening of Inter-Arab ties and collaboration that can deal with the current challenges facing the Arab nation.

### Foreign policy

A broad overview of the UAE's foreign policy was presented to the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York by the country's Foreign Minister, H H Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

He dealt first with key threats and challenges to peace, international law and order, stability and sustainable development that transcend national borders. Among these, he said, were international financial crisis, the impact of climate change, the increase of unemployment and poverty, outbreaks of infectious diseases, the lack of security and stability in a number of countries, the stalemate in the Middle East peace process and the continued primacy of military solutions over peaceful options and soft power in international affairs.

"The enormous challenges facing our international community today require effective change and cooperation," Sheikh Abdullah said. "This is needed in order to achieve full compliance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law and in order to achieve a systematic development of relations among nations on the basis of justice and common interest. This will help us achieve peace, security and prosperity for Mankind."

Sheikh Abdullah said that the desired changes in international diplomacy should not be limited to methods and techniques, but should also tackle core issues and should work towards an environment

in which people can live in dignity, security and peaceful coexistence without conflicts or discrimination or clashes between civilizations.

The UAE placed greater importance of the role played by the United Nations system and other international organizations in strengthening multilateral cooperation in dealing with existing international challenges, he said.

The Minister noted that the goal of achieving security and stability in the Gulf region was a vital priority for the UAE's balanced foreign policy, whose principles are drawn from the UN charter and the provisions of international law, particularly those calling for peaceful co-existence, promotion of confidence-building measures, good neighbourliness and mutual respect, non-intervention in the internal affairs of states and the peaceful settlement of existing differences.

The UAE had noted, with satisfaction, the gradual withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq and the extension of the authority of its Government over all its territory, Sheikh Abdullah said.

"In this context, we reaffirm our long-standing support to the people and the Government of Iraq. In particular, we support their efforts to expedite the rebuilding of their security, legislative and economic institutions. We also support the accomplishment of national reconciliation, which constitutes the real guarantee of the success of a comprehensive and totally inclusive political process in Iraq that would include all sects and components of the Iraqi people, without discrimination or exception."

"We wish also to express our deep concern at the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Iraq and we strongly condemn the recent bombings which have taken place in this brotherly country as acts of terror. In this context, we call for the respect of the territorial integrity of Iraq, its sovereignty and independence and non-intervention in its internal affairs. We also call for safeguarding the Arab and Islamic identity of Iraq and stand against all attempts aimed at dismembering the Iraqi state", the Foreign Minister said.

In another key part of his speech to the UN General Assembly, Sheikh Abdullah expressed the UAE's disappointment at the failure to make progress in the Middle East process. Instead, he noted, the situation has deteriorated because of the continued hostile attitude of the Israeli Government in the



The oil sector accounts for 3 per cent of Dubai's GDP.

Palestinian and Arab territories. This had involved, he noted, the suffocating blockade imposed on the Palestinian people, particularly in Gaza, the continued rejection by Israel of internationally-validated resolutions and the further annexation of Palestinian and Arab territories. Israel has also continued to build new settlements and to construct its 'separation wall', as well as to carry out excavation under the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem and to confiscate Palestinian property, particularly in Jerusalem.

This is all done with a view to changing the historical and cultural identity and eradicating the Arab and Islamic character of the area, he said, adding that this was in flagrant violation of the principles of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, relating to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

Welcoming the views expressed by US President Barack Obama in his speech to the UN, Sheikh Abdullah said that these had included some solid foundations for negotiations between the Palestinians

and the Israeli Government. "We hope that Mr. Obama will continue following up this important dossier," he said.

He added, however, "We also wish to emphasise that the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East requires Israel to withdraw fully from all occupied Arab territories in Palestine and from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights to the line of 4th June 1967. It also requires Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories in southern Lebanon based on the principle of Land for Peace, and in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative and its requirements."

"We in the UAE stand by and support the Palestinian National Authority and the Palestinian people. In this context, we commend President Mahmoud Abbas for his tireless efforts to restore the rights of his people, to establish a Palestinian state and to achieve development and peace there."

"We also support the sincere efforts currently undertaken by the Arab Republic of Egypt to reconcile among the Palestinian factions with a view to forming a Palestinian national unity Government. This Government would be capable of achieving the aspirations of the Palestinian people."

The Foreign Minister also noted that the UAE attached special importance to the countries of Africa and to the continent's regional groupings, adding that it was seeking to strengthen its cooperation and trade with these countries by entering into bilateral and multilateral partnerships in accordance with the UN Millennium Development Goals. A particular concern, he said, was those goals seeking to eradicate poverty and to ensure that Africa received a fair and equitable share of global prosperity.

On a global level, he said, the UAE would continue to ensure that its oil and gas exports would continue to be supplied to the international community, without restrictions and without political or non-political impediments. The UAE fully recognized the importance of these supplies to the global economy, he added.

"The UAE will continue to follow a consistent foreign policy, guided by the principles and purpose of the UN, particularly with regard to the settlement of international disputes through peaceful means and non-intervention in the internal affairs of states," he said. "In this context, we affirm our continued commitment to the One China principle."

He also reiterated the commitment of the UAE, as an active member of the international community, to respect the principles of human rights as well as the provisions of relevant international conventions. The comprehensive periodic report on the UAE was adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva last December.

The Minister noted that the steady growth of the UAE economy over the past years

has provided employment opportunities for millions of workers from other countries in different sectors of the national economy. These workers, he said have not only contributed in an effective way to UAE development, but have also made major contributions to the economies of their home countries through remittances.

"My Government attaches great importance to the conditions of migrant labour and the protection of their full rights in accordance with the UAE's constitution, national legislation, and international labour standards. My Government has recently adopted a set of policies and measures aimed at enhancing labour protection in many aspects including wages, housing and reducing the impact of the international economic crisis," he said.

He noted that the UAE has taken the initiative to intensify regional cooperation among exporting and importing labour countries in Asia with the so-called Abu Dhabi Dialogue, which aims at promoting the protection of labour in all stages of contractual work.

### Internal development

Women and children occupy an important place among the priorities of the UAE Government, particularly with regards to education, health, human development and knowledge development. The empowerment of women and care and protection of children are among the country's major success stories and UAE women today occupy important places in the legislative, executive and political sphere in the UAE as well as in the private sector and in the areas of culture, creativity and sustainable development of the UAE.

This process has been facilitated by the rapid improvement in the UAE's healthcare sector, and over the last year, considerable strides have been made in enhancing what is already a high quality of health care.

Among projects announced during the year have been plans for two major new world-class health care facilities at Mafraq and Al Ain, which will be operated by SEHA, the Abu Dhabi Health Services Company.

The new state-of-the-art facilities will replace the existing Mafraq and Al Ain Hospitals and will be built and operational by 2013, with a combined total of 1,378 beds, compared to 843 beds in the existing hospitals.

According to Saif Bader Al Qubisi, the Chairman of SEHA, "Innovation, development and growth in the healthcare sector is part of the Vision Abu Dhabi 2030, and the new hospitals are a tangible realisation of the promise we have made to bring world-class healthcare to this emirate. Both will be equipped with the most modern facilities and the latest equipment with the aim of creating excellence centres offering specialised treatment facilities and services."

By mid-2009, the UAE had a total of 40 public hospitals and 115 primary care centres,

according to Ministry of Health statistics, compared to only 7 and 12, respectively, in 1971. There is also an extensive private healthcare sector.

### Oil and gas: Expanding refining capacity

The Emirate of Abu Dhabi produces most of the UAE's oil and gas and has around 90 per cent of the country's hydrocarbon reserves. Total crude oil reserves are estimated to be 98 billion barrels, the third largest in the world, while the UAE also has the world's fifth largest reserves of natural gas, at 6 trillion cubic feet.

Current installed oil production capacity is 2.8 million barrels per day (bpd), although, in compliance with the quota system of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, OPEC, daily UAE production is currently around 2.5 million bpd.

Large scale investment in

million bpd of oil and to provide additional gas supplies for the UAE's growing economy.

### UAE enters the age of nuclear energy

In 2008, the UAE Government announced details of a comprehensive national policy on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. This has been adopted in order to meet a projected increase in demand for energy by 2020 from around 15.5 GWe in 2008 to over 40 GWe in 2020. Available natural gas supplies will only be able to meet half of this demand, and nuclear power was chosen as a proven and sustainable way of permitting the country to guarantee its energy security.

Following discussions with the International Atomic Energy Authority, IAEA, the Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation, ENEC, has been created to oversee the implementation of the programme, with US\$ 100 million allocated as initial funding, while legislation is also being prepared to establish a fully independent nuclear regulatory authority.

The programme will be carried out through joint venture agreements with foreign investors, on the pattern already established for the existing Independent Water and Power Producer Plants.

Rather than seeking to embark on its own domestic enrichment and processing programmes, the UAE will seek to conclude long-term deals with foreign suppliers for the secure supply of nuclear fuel, as well as, if available, the disposal of spent fuel via fuel leasing or other emerging fuel supply arrangements.

Nuclear co-operation agreements have been signed with the United States, Britain and France.

In all, a total of 14 plants are proposed, to deliver 20 GWe of power by 2020. This would free up 35 million tonnes of oil or 40 billion cubic metres of gas per year for export.

In his speech late in the year to the United Nations General Assembly, Foreign Minister HH Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan outlined the reasoning behind the UAE's decision to embark on a programme for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

"The UAE hopes that developing a peaceful nuclear energy model which complies with the highest standards of transparency in operating the nuclear facilities and fulfills

sustainable development programme.

The federal Ministry of Environment and Water is complemented at a local level by separate agencies, among which the Environment Agency-- Abu Dhabi, EAD, and the Sharjah Environment and Protected Areas Authority, EPAA, are particularly noteworthy for their extensive conservation programmes. Non-governmental organisations, like the Emirates Wildlife Society, affiliated to the Worldwide Fund for Nature, WWF, the Emirates Marine Environmental Group and the Emirates Natural History Group are also active, particularly in research and education.

The UAE has become a signatory of all relevant international agreements and protocols on environmental protection and sustainable development and has also entered into partnerships designed to promote conservation.

Through the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna, CITES, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, IUCN, the UAE's environmental bodies work closely with like-minded organizations overseas, while numerous bilateral agreements have been signed with other countries whose birdlife migrates to the UAE.

During the year, Abu Dhabi's EAD worked with the relevant ministry in Britain and with the Convention on Migratory Species, CMS, to launch a new international Memorandum of Understanding on the conservation of birds of prey in Europe, Africa and Asia, now signed by over 20 countries. Abu Dhabi has been chosen as the headquarters for the secretariat of this agreement as well as for a number of other conservation bodies, including the Coordinating Committee for Conservation of Arabian Oryx.

A programme of releasing captive-bred Arabian Oryx into the deserts of Abu Dhabi was successfully launched by EAD during the year. EAD is also sponsoring a US\$ 1.1 million three-year project involving the reintroduction to reintroduce Arabian Oryx into the wild in the Wadi Rum Protected Area in Jordan. The project also involves habitat restoration and helping local residents to improve their living standards.

Another important initia-



Formation of a new Mohammed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund was announced in October 2008.

the highest requirements of nuclear safety and non-proliferation, in cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency and other responsible and experienced states, will chart out a new course for a large group of countries for the safe use of nuclear energy, with international support," Sheikh Abdullah said.

"The UAE's commitment not to enrich uranium and reprocess fuels locally is among the most salient features of this model. This is a model supported by enhanced international transparency and cooperation mechanisms."

### Protection of the environment a high priority

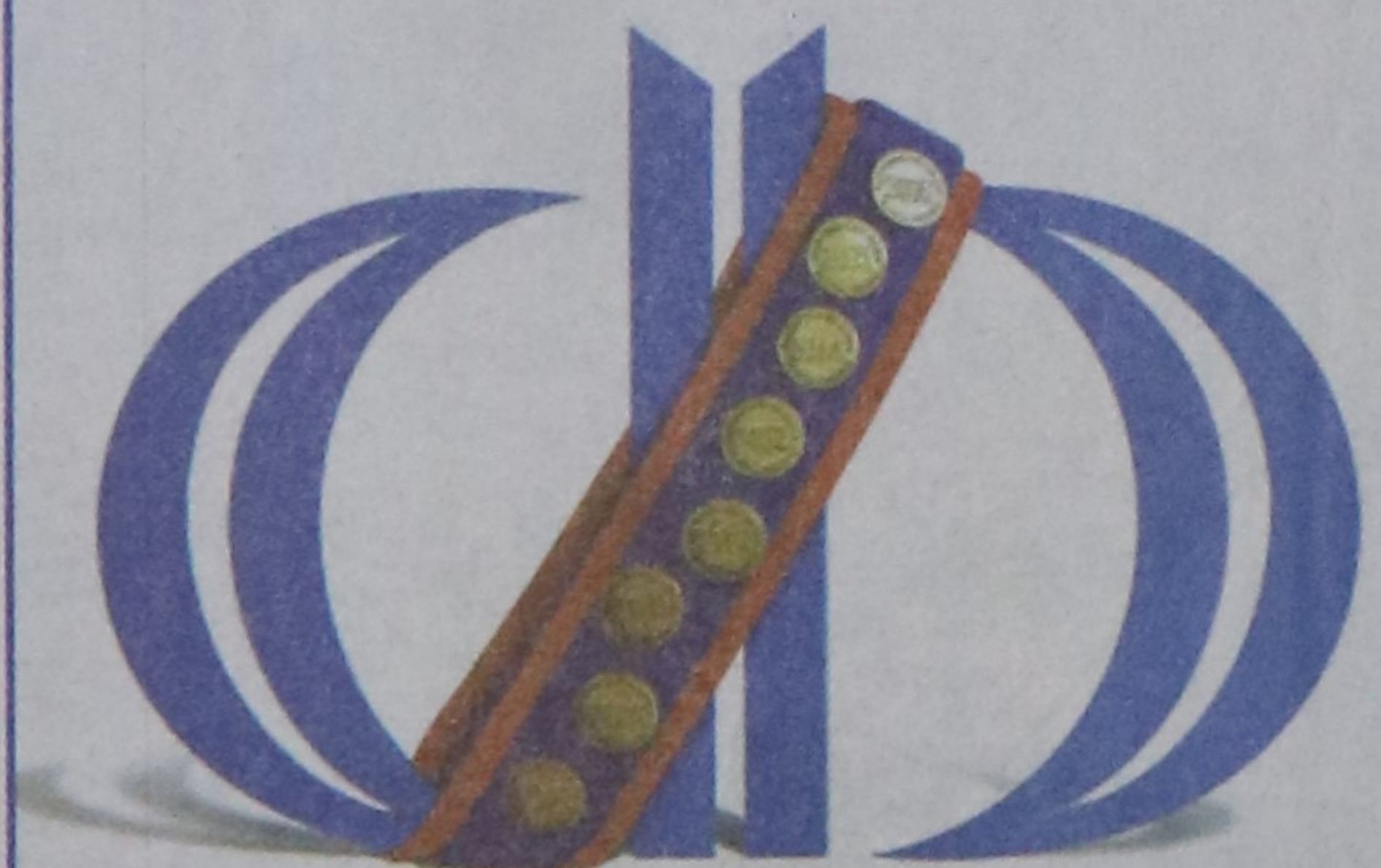
The United Arab Emirates has long recognised that protection of the natural environment must be a key priority of government and that, together with economic and social development, constitutes the three pillars of a

tive, announced at the IUCN Congress in Barcelona in late 2008, was the launching of the Mohammed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund with an initial endowment of euro 25,000,000 (Twenty Five Million Euros). This is designed to provide help for conservation throughout the world.

EAD also entered into a partnership with the World Health Organisation, WHO, to develop a national strategy for environmental health in the UAE. The two bodies also co-organised the International Conference on Environmental Health 2009, in March 2009 in Abu Dhabi.

Other activities related to the environment during the year included further work on the Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative, AGEDI, a project that has led to Abu Dhabi's first formal State of the Environment Report, while the Zayed International Prize for the Environment continued to be the world's top award for environmental achievements.

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