

EURO-GULF MONITOR

30 December 2020 - 7 January 2021
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WEEK IN BRIEF

1. Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt reestablished diplomatic relations with Qatar, ending the GCC rift.
2. Oman launched a five-year development plan to stimulate economy and investment.
3. The UAE signed a \$1 billion (USD) deal with Swedish Saab for another two GlobalEye surveillance systems.
4. Bahrain has the third-highest COVID-19 vaccination rate in the world after Israel and the UAE.
5. Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company acquired a 25% share in Egypt's offshore bloc in the Herodotus Basin in the Mediterranean, in consortium with Total (30%), Shell (30%) and Tharwa (10%).



ROUND & ABOUT THE GULF

KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

Wednesday, 6 January–Bahrain has the third-highest COVID-19 vaccination rate in the world after Israel (17.14) and the UAE (8.35), with 4.02 vaccination doses administered per 100 people. Citizens and residents can schedule the vaccination for free via Bahrain's COVID-19 contact tracing app, BeAware, or the Ministry of Health, and choose between the Pfizer-BioNTech and Sinopharm vaccines.

STATE OF KUWAIT

Tuesday, 5 January–The Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) inked an exploration and production deal with the Egyptian Natural Gas Holding Company (EGAS) in a bid to expand investments in Egypt. KUFPEC secured a 25% share in the Egyptian offshore bloc Ras Kanayis, located in the Herodotus Basin in the Mediterranean Sea, in partnership with Total (30%), Shell (30%) and EGAS (10%).

SULTANATE OF OMAN

Sunday, 3 January–Oman's Ministry of Economy launched its five-year development plan for the 2021-2025 period as the first executive strategy of the wider Oman Vision 2040. According to the plan, the country aims to expand its economy, rationalise public spending, and stimulate private and foreign direct investment and generate 135,000 jobs in both public and private sectors within its term.

STATE OF QATAR

Tuesday, 5 January–The Swedish ICT multinational company, Ericsson, inked an agreement with the Qatari-headquartered telecommunications company, Ooredoo Group, to provide its 5G products and services for the Group's companies in Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Iraq, Algeria, Tunisia, Palestine, Indonesia Myanmar and Maldives and modernise Ooredoo's network platforms through 5G-enabled technology provided by Ericsson.

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Monday, 4 January–Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the UAE reestablished diplomatic relations with Qatar after three and a half years. The Kingdom announced the reopening of the airspace, land and sea border with Doha ahead of the GCC Summit in Al Ula, taking the first step towards ending the GCC Crisis.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Wednesday, 30 December–The UAE military signed a \$1 billion (USD) deal with the Swedish aerospace and defence company, Saab, to purchase two GlobalEye, airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) systems, which should be delivered by 2025. The deal is an extension of a 2015 contract for three GlobalEye planes, first of which arrived in the UAE in April 2020.



- Tuesday, 29 December–The EU condemned the deadly attack at the airport of Aden, Yemen, after the landing of the plane carrying the newly formed government. Denouncing such attacks as undermining the region’s stability, the EU encouraged the parties involved in the process of conflict resolution to endure peaceful confrontation.



- Wednesday, 30 December–The EU and Bahrain discussed an agreement for cooperation in human rights development and energy transition, at the AL-Bilad Forum, attended by Head of the EU Delegation to Bahrain, Patrick Simonnet.



- Wednesday, 6 January–The EU welcomed the agreement on normalisation among the GCC countries, praising the mediation efforts of the United States and Kuwait. The EU highlighted that full functioning of the GCC and collaboration among its members contribute to regional peace and cohesion and affirmed its keenness to enhance EU-GCC cooperation.

KEY OFFICIAL VISITS

- Wednesday, 30 December–Kuwait’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, visited Bahrain, Oman and Qatar ahead of the GCC Summit. In Manama, Minister Al-Sabah met with Bahrain’s Crown Prince, Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, and in Muscat with Oman’s Deputy Prime Minister, Fahad bin Mahmoud Al-Said, delivering two letters from Kuwait’s Emir to the countries’ leaders. He also visited Doha, where he met with his Qatari counterpart, Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani.



- Wednesday, 6 January–The 41st Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit was held in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia. Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman Al-Saud, chaired the meeting, which gathered GCC countries’ leaders and officials to end the Gulf rift between Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Qatar by signing the Al-Ula Declaration. The Summit was attended by Bahrain’s Crown Prince, Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, Kuwait’s Emir, Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Oman’s Deputy Prime Minister, Fahd bin Mahmud, Qatar’s Emir, Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and the UAE’s Prime Minister, Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. Other participants included Egypt’s Foreign Minister, Sameh Hassan Shoukry, and US White House advisors.

- Thursday, 7 January–The US Acting Secretary of Homeland Security, Chad Wolf, and his accompanying delegation met with Bahrain’s Minister of Interior, General Rashid bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa, in Manama. They discussed aspects of cooperation in cyber- and critical infrastructures’ security, particularly through coordination between Bahrain’s National Centre for Cyber Security and the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). They also signed three security cooperation agreements in border security, counterterrorism and cross-border crime and faster travel permits via the US Global Entry programme.



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About the Euro-Gulf Monitor: The Arabian Gulf is rapidly becoming a geopolitical pivot. As a result, it is important to understand the internal and international dynamics unfolding in the region and the countries that compose it. The Euro-Gulf Monitor includes a small, carefully selected, batch of the most important news and events unfolding in the Arab Gulf countries to help you map the region’s trends and the dynamics of its relations with Europe, published weekly by the Euro-Gulf Information Centre.