

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002683/24
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Hana Jalloul Muro (S&D)
(27 November 2024)

Subject: EU-Saudi Arabia relations

Saudi Arabia is an increasingly significant economic and diplomatic partner for Europe, playing a pivotal role in the stability and development of the Middle East region. In addition to its strategic importance, Saudi Arabia is an important actor in global discussions on climate change, connectivity and energy, as demonstrated by its goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. Moreover, the EU remains its second largest trading partner. Despite this, recent efforts to boost our relationship have largely remained at the formal level.

In 2021, the European External Action Service and Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed a cooperation arrangement under which official political dialogues were to be organised on a yearly basis. In 2022, the Joint Communication on a strategic partnership with the Gulf outlined the EU's strategy to strengthen relations with Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia.

In this context:

1. What is the state of EU-Saudi Arabia relations in terms of political, economic and trade initiatives (including the digital and green transition), and how does the Commission plan to strengthen these relations?
2. What is the state of the political dialogues stemming from the 2021 cooperation arrangement and what outcomes or developments have been achieved?
3. What is the implementation status of the initiatives outlined in the Joint Communication concerning Saudi Arabia?

Submitted: 27.11.2024

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(4 February 2025)

The EU and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) maintain a growing partnership based on regional stability, sustainable development and economic transformation, aligned with the 2022 EU Gulf Strategy ⁽¹⁾ and Saudi Vision 2030 ⁽²⁾.

The Crown Prince's participation in the first EU-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit in Brussels in October 2023 underscored KSA's commitment to a stronger, forward-looking partnership with the EU in key areas, notably trade, investment, energy, connectivity, and green and digital transitions.

Under the 2021 EU-KSA Cooperation Arrangement ⁽³⁾, the two sides hold annual political dialogues; the last one took place in Brussels in July 2023, as well as annual Senior Officials Meetings on global issues, the last one took place in Riyadh in September 2023.

The KSA also hosts the first in the region EU-GCC Chamber of Commerce. In addition, the EU and KSA hold annual formal Human Rights Dialogues, addressing all rights issues and cooperation in multilateral fora, the most recent one in Riyadh in December 2024.

The EU Special Representative for the Gulf also contributes to strengthening the EU-KSA partnership, particularly on regional security, as reflected at the April 2024 EU-GCC High-Level Forum on regional security, attended by the KSA Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The KSA is a key EU partner for regional security and stability, notably in the framework of the joint EU-Norway-KSA Global Alliance for implementation of the two-state solution, with participation of more than 90 countries. The KSA Minister of Foreign Affairs has also joined relevant Foreign Affairs Council discussions.

The EU and KSA are currently finalising the negotiations on a memorandum of understanding on Energy Transitions and Clean Technology Cooperation, focusing on low emissions, renewables, hydrogen, and energy efficiency.

⁽¹⁾ JOIN(2022) 13 final.

⁽²⁾ https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/media/rc0b5oy1/saudi_vision203.pdf

⁽³⁾ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2024/EEAS%20-%20KSA%20MFA%20Cooperation%20Arrangement%20FINAL_ENG_signed.pdf