

# Kuwait calls for strategic cooperation with NATO

## Imperatives in global threats

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 12 (Agencies): Kuwait on Tuesday called for "strategic security cooperation" between Nato and Gulf Arab states, while urging the organisation to initiate trust-building measures.

"Kuwait and the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states are looking forward to building strategic security cooperation with Nato," said the head of Kuwait National Security Agency, Sheikh Ahmad Fahd Al-Sabah.

Sheikh Ahmad, however, said the public perception in the region of Nato was of a "Western military

alliance that uses military force only to achieve the interests of its members."

"Nato should initiate confidence-building measures with the peoples in the region, decision-makers and opinion leaders for them to better appreciate its real goals and intentions for setting up security partnership with the region," he told the opening of an international conference of Nato and Gulf countries.

A large number of delegates from Nato members and GCC states were attending the one-day conference

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## Balance of regional power changing

### Gulf alarmed by 'confusion' in US

MANAMA, Dec 12 (AFP): On top of the violence in Iraq and Iran's growing ambitions, the oil-rich Gulf countries are worried about the perceived political disarray of Washington on whom they rely for their security.

"Iran is a problem. Iraq is a problem. There are so many problems," analyst Abdulkhaleq

Abdullah said following the Dialogue on Gulf Security held in the Bahraini capital.

"The issue is Washington. At the moment, Washington is in a state of confusion," said Abdullah, professor of political science at the Emirates University in Dubai.

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based on the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) launched two years ago by Nato leaders.

Kuwait earlier Tuesday signed a security agreement with Nato to regulate the exchange of security information with the 26-member organisation.

Sheikh Ahmad said any cooperation to succeed must take the form of a "regional security participation within a framework of well-defined agreements ... and Nato should not discriminate between countries".

Nato Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer called for enhancing cooperation between Nato and Gulf states because they faced the same threats.

"We face the same threats — terrorism, nuclear proliferation and failed states. We all have a vital strategic interest in a stable Iraq and a stable broader Middle East region. We all share a common interest in energy security," he said.

Scheffer said Nato was adopting a new security approach in a globalised world by trying to find "new answers to new challenges", and not just to defend Europe against the threat of invasion as was the case during the Cold War.

"We have realised that territorial understanding of security is simply too narrow in an age of global threats," he said.

"Rather than wait for challenges to come to us, we must be prepared to meet challenges where they emerge, even if that means deploying far away from our traditional European perimeter."

Scheffer said that cooperation between Nato and Gulf states had already increased in the fields of political contacts, intelligence sharing and military inter-operability.

Scheffer also said that the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) was not an attempt to march into the Gulf region.

De Hoop Scheffer made that statement during a press conference with Sheikh Ahmad at the closing of the conference.

He stressed, "ICI is not Nato's march into the region," noting that nothing was being imposed on any nation and sovereignty was being respected at all times.

Respecting each nation's independence is a key factor for trust and cooperation, and continuing this step requires comprehensive political dialogue, he said.

Earlier in the morning His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah Stressed that "this consultative meeting" was aimed at laying the ground for closer cooperation between the two sides.

The Prime Minister affirmed, in his inaugural address, that stability, cooperation and development were fundamental objectives of GCC countries and it was from here that cooperation with Nato derived its importance.

Elaborating, he said Nato's 26 members had "expertise, capabilities and experiences from which our countries (GCC) may benefit and learn."

He said GCC-Nato cooperation and exchanging expertise was the "best means to overcome crises, serve the people and promote peace."

Sheikh Nasser noted that the Middle East had endured continued crises over the past decade that "people have paid a high price with lives and lost opportunities for development."

Moreover, he said the Gulf's indispensable oil reserves were "the basis and the instigator of international development."

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