

# NATO can help in enhancing region's stability, says official

**DOHA** • With security becoming the focus of increasing concern in the region, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) feels it can help the nations of the region to enhance stability, a top NATO official said here yesterday.

"NATO can work closely with the nations of the region. It does not intend to impose anything but to develop knowledge, common training and being able to bring much more for peace and stability," NATO Assistant Secretary General, Public Diplomacy, Jean-Francois Bureau told *The Peninsula*.

Bureau was in Doha taking part in a one-day seminar on NATO's role for stability and peace organized by the Strategic Studies Centre at Qatar's Ministry of Defence.

NATO is interested in building bridges to individual countries and not only in engaging other international organizations, he said, adding that the Alliance can bring an added value in cooperating with the organization in view of its unique experience but does not intend to be a substitute to UN Security Council.

Relations between NATO and countries in the Gulf, members of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) have been steadily growing with a number of activities being planned this year.

"The ICI is really about exchanging knowledge and experience and developing together trainings on the basis of bilateral relations with nations who want to take part in this process," said Bureau.

The ICI which was established in 2004 opened up an opportunity for countries

in the Gulf to work together with NATO. Qatar joined the initiative early on, together with Kuwait, Bahrain and the UAE. Saudi Arabia and Oman have yet to join the ICI.

In his keynote address at the seminar, NATO Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Claudio Bisogniero said the relationship between NATO and Qatar has been growing in the last few years with political consultations steadily deepening.

"Our practical cooperation has intensified as well, especially at the military-to-military level. There has been a growing number of participants from Qatar in NATO courses and seminars. Besides, Qatar was the first ICI country to appoint a Liaison Officer to NATO in Brussels, in order to facilitate our cooperation," said Bisogniero.

A NATO team recently visited Doha to discuss additional opportunities, including in crisis management and civil emergency planning as well as the possibility of elaborating an Individual Cooperation Programme with the Alliance, in order to better structure and focus the cooperation.

NATO is also keen to share more widely with interested ICI partners its unique expertise in training military forces to help them build forces that are more interoperable with those of the NATO allies.

"But we are also interested in the experience of our ICI partners, especially in crisis management and peace support operations," Bisogniero said.