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POL-GCC-NATO

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RIYADH, Jan 21 (KUNA) -- Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal inaugurated here on Sunday a seminar entitled "NATO-GCC Cooperation Within the Framework of Istanbul Initiative" praising the approach of the regional states to broaden cooperation with the Western alliance.

In an address at the inaugural session, Prince Saud said the Middle East is one of the regions in the world that is characterized by turmoil. He called for effective international cooperation to bring about stability in the region, according to official Saudi Press Agency (SPA).

Prince Saud noted that the extremist ideology grows in the atmosphere of disappointment, caused by the failure of the international community in settling the pending chronic problems.

"The kingdom of Saudi Arabia believes in the importance of fighting terrorism and extremism and spreading the values of tolerance and moderation as well as combating racial ideologies," he said.

Prince Saud pointed out that the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz, had earlier called for the convening of the extraordinary Makkah Summit which slammed terrorism and extremism and advocated moderation and dialogue as well as urged for confronting the phenomenon of "Islam-phobia." He noted that King Abdullah has called for establishing an international center for combating terrorism under supervision of the United Nations.

Prince Saud said the kingdom has been following up with great concern on the current developments following the end of the era of the Cold War.

He noted that the NATO has formulated the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative which includes some of the GCC member states.

Prince Saud underscored the importance of exchange of data and expertise in combating terrorism as well as prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

"However, any cooperation should be based on the respect of sovereignty and peculiarities of the countries as well as their political options," he noted. Underlining importance of the seminar, Prince Saud said it will provide a good opportunity to exchange views clearly on issues of mutual interest.

The participants of the seminar will review a number of topics including the role of NATO after the era of the Cold War; the regional problems as well as means of promoting the Istanbul Initiative.

The inaugural session was attended by a number of dignitaries and senior officials.

The seminar is organized by the Institute of Diplomatic Studies in cooperation with the Dubai-based Gulf Center for Studies.(end) ud.

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KUNA 211837 Jan 07NNNN