

GCC, Nato peace partners

A battle of ideas is on and the direction it takes might affect the security of Europe and North America, a two-day conference, entitled 'Media in a changing world: Gulf and Nato visions' was told yesterday.

The Minister of Information, Dr Mohammed Abdulghaffar, addressed the inaugural session, saying the theme of the conference mirrored in a conspicuous manner the current era characterised by mounting tension and conflicts. There was also potential for accord, he said and emphasised the need to discuss issues of paramount importance to the Gulf and Nato states to attain a clearer understanding of complicated issues.

This initiative is a result of a decisions taken during the 17th Nato summit, known as the 2004 Istanbul Summit, the seventh after the end of the cold war is a new turning point, the minister said, as it represents the strategy of building bridges, partnership and cooperation with other regions, including the Gulf.

This strategy, the minister said, aimed to confront global

challenges and bolster security and stability through solutions proposed by the Nato to solve regional issues amid the threats that had resulted from accelerating changes. Some of the challenges, he felt, were WMD proliferation, terrorism, organised crime, drugs, money-laundering and none of the threats were confined to an individual state or a particular organisation.

The minister said none of these global threats could be dealt in a piecemeal basis due to the existence of interconnectivity between regional and global issues.

Based on this premise and out of a desire to consolidate the pillars of security and stability, Bahrain and most of the GCC states had interacted positively with a novel strategic tendency within the Nato framework.

"We are all aware that enormous changes occurred in international relations and in the balance of power after the end of the cold war, the September 11 events and after the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq."

All these changes had an

effect on Nato's nature, structure, responsibilities and tasks within and outside its traditional framework. Dr Abdulghaffar felt that Nato's concepts, instruments and policies had changed and the era of confrontation had turned into an era of cooperation, partnership and joint responsibilities in managing crises, resolving conflicts and building the pillars of peace in a post-armed conflicts era. This made Nato a partner in the Mediterranean dialogue and ensured it engaged in a dialogue with the GCC states within the framework of the Istanbul initiative to bring about greater understanding and begin tackling security threats, including terrorism.

"In the light of these changes and events in the regional and international arenas, a need has arisen for the media on both sides to remove the misconceptions and distorted stereotypes and explain complex security issues to achieve mutual understanding of the needs for security, stability and sustained development of the GCC states and societies through fair and objective media on both sides," he said.