The Speech of the GRC Chairman, Abdulaziz Sager, The Gulf and Africa: Developing a New Strategic Partnership

February 24-25, 2009

As the Gulf Research Center (GRC) expands on its research programs, we are pleased to announce the holding of the first Gulf-Africa Strategy Forum as part of our Gulf-Africa Research Program. The Strategy Forum, entitled “Developing a New Strategic Partnership” is a milestone not only for the Gulf Research Center but also in the long history of Gulf-Africa relations.

The GRC believes that both regions have much to learn about and from one another. The development of a multi-level economic, social and political relationship is crucial to creating a beneficial and sustainable partnership with Africa. This partnership has become all the more important in the current context of the global financial crisis as well as growing concerns over such issues as energy, food security and climate change. As the world economy is hit hard by a global phenomenon, emerging markets such as the Gulf and Africa which have, relatively speaking, been less affected, must work on a strong recovery. This move cannot be deemed sustainable without a better understanding of the other and a strong political commitment.

This conference is the perfect platform for both regions to undertake this task. We intend the forum to become an important annual event, set into a long-term timeframe in order to support best the evolution of this renewed relationship. The event brings together key leaders and personalities from government, academia, business and media to outline the main issues and challenges facing more constructive ties. We aim to propose a set of policy recommendations that can ensure that opportunities in closer Gulf-Africa ties are highlighted and adequately responded to.

This year, the Forum aims to cement the Gulf-Africa relationship by offering an in-depth assessment of the status of ties and a clear outlook to the future potential of such a relationship. Similar goals and challenges such as demographic pressures, energy and food security, fluctuating sustained economic growth and unemployment are growing realities faced by both regions. The Forum will also identify the future economic sectors which will become the center of Gulf investments as well as highlight the need for an examination of security and political issues related to a more prosperous relationship. It is only natural that both regions come together to answer to some of these issues

As one of the most prominent think-tanks in the Middle East, the Gulf Research Center is dedicated towards expanding knowledge of the Gulf region and reaching out to other parts of the world in order to form a better understanding. The GRC would like to urge all scholars, experts and those active in Gulf-Africa affairs to take part and contribute to this initiative. Your participation and involvement are important towards increased insight and knowledge about these two regions.