



PM KISHIDA'S MIDDLE EAST VISIT TO STRENGTHEN TIES WITH THE REGION

AN EXCERPT

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From July 16 to 18, Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio visited Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar on his first trip to the Gulf region since taking office. He held meetings with the leaders of these countries and discussed a wide range of topics, such as regional and international affairs, including the situation in Ukraine, as well as bilateral relations. PM Kishida was accompanied on this visit by an economic mission to expand business opportunities for Japanese enterprises.

As I wrap up my visit to the Middle East, I will make a few remarks.

This time, I have visited three important partner countries in the Gulf region: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar. This is my first visit to the Gulf region since I visited Qatar as Foreign Minister in 2015 and my first since taking office as Prime Minister.

I sincerely appreciate the heartwarming welcome extended by His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates and His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, as well

as government officials and citizens of the three countries, on this rare opportunity.

At the G7 Hiroshima Summit, we confirmed the importance of maintaining a free and open international order based on the rule of law with the G7 and our international partner countries including those belonging to the so-called Global South. Last week once again, we confirmed this recognition with the EU (European Union), NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and their member countries and partner countries. And this time around, we were able to firmly confirm this fundamental principle with the leaders of the Gulf countries.

Regarding the question of how we should deal with

From left: Prime Minister Kishida receiving greetings from His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; H.H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates; H.H. Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar.

issues in the energy sector, which is at the core of the relationship between Japan and the Middle East, we were able to deepen our discussions from a global perspective, at a time when Russia's aggression against Ukraine has destabilized the global energy supply.

Furthermore, all of the three countries I visited this time have a strong desire to break with their current state of economy that relies on oil and gas exports for more than half of their national revenue, transform themselves into decarbonized energy exporters, and diversify their economies and industries. Combining the strengths of the Gulf countries with that of Japan to transform the Middle East oil-producing countries into global green energy hubs to export decarbonized energy and critical minerals, as well as ensuring that many countries in Asia and Africa that face the dilemma between economic growth and decarbonization will have various paths to decarbonization to choose from, will make a highly meaningful contribution to world peace and prosperity.

For the first time under my administration, I was accompanied by an economic mission during the trip. CEOs and other executives of a total of more than 100 Japanese companies, as well as the heads of government-affiliated organizations such as JBIC (Japan Bank for International Cooperation) and NEXI (Nippon Export and Investment Insurance), had direct dialogue with

the leaders and corporate executives of the three Gulf countries, laying the foundation for cooperation in various areas. Such public-private partnerships involving top executives and strengthening channels between private sectors on both sides were also important objectives of this trip.

The major objectives I have just mentioned were largely achieved thanks to the enthusiasm and cooperation from the people of the three countries I visited, and I will now focus on the following four points with regards to the specific outcome of the visit.

Firstly, regarding the energy sector, we concurred in the decision to cooperate in promoting green transformation. In talks with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which chairs this year's COP28 (28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), I presented my vision of making the Middle East region a global supply hub of clean energy and critical minerals through Japan's cooperation, to which they agreed. We also received very positive proposals from both countries on how to advance concrete cooperation. In order to realize this vision, we will strengthen cooperation in the production of hydrogen and ammonia as well as the practical application and spread of decarbonization technologies.

We plan to deepen our cooperation not just in energy sources, but also in research and development of materials that do not emit carbon dioxide during the manufacturing process, such as green steel. I proposed the "Global Green Journey" concept, intended to lay out a big picture for a realistic energy transition, on top of the cooperation I have just mentioned, which was also concurred.

Following talks with the UAE, we issued the Japan-United Arab Emirates Leaders' Joint Statement on Climate Action. We will strengthen cooperation on decarbonization and other related areas and jointly lead the efforts of the international community toward the success of COP28.

The second outcome was Japan's demonstration of its strong commitment to the economic and industrial diversification of the three Gulf countries. A total of seven bilateral cooperation documents were signed in the areas of advanced technology, semiconductors, space, healthcare, education, agriculture and tourism.

Our cooperation is not limited to inter-governmental initiatives. More than 50 Memorandums of Cooperation



Prime Minister Kishida attended the Japan-Saudi Arabia Business Roundtable Meeting. Participants from approximately 40 Japanese companies and organizations accompanying the prime minister for the economic mission also attended the meeting.

were signed between Japanese companies and those of the three Gulf countries, including one between a Saudi power company and Toray regarding joint research on a seawater desalination plant, and another between a UAE company and Fujifilm regarding a sales and maintenance contract for medical software.

Accelerating innovation through partnerships with start-ups is also important in the area of cutting-edge sectors such as decarbonization. In talks with the UAE in preparation of COP28, I proposed the Japan-UAE Innovation Partnership, which was concurred by the UAE side. Regarding the FTA (Free Trade Agreement) between Japan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), for which the business community had great expectations, GCC Secretary General Jasem Al Budaiwi and I coincided to resume negotiations in 2024.

Taking this opportunity, Japan will strongly support the promotion of green transformation in the Gulf countries and reform efforts toward industrial diversification, while also seeking the expansion of business opportunities for Japanese companies as well as investment in Japan.

The third outcome is the strengthened relations on the security front. Saudi Arabia is the only Arab country that is a member of the G20. The UAE has been a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council since 2022 and is serving the same term as Japan. Qatar has



In Saudi Arabia, Prime Minister Kishida inspected a buggy equipped with a hydrogen engine for motorcycles. He confirmed with the countries he visited that Japan will actively support their industrial diversification including decarbonization.

increased its international presence through its recent diplomatic efforts. Together with these Gulf countries, which are becoming increasingly influential in terms of both politics and economy, we coincided to increase opportunities for dialogue on the diplomatic and defense fronts and to further deepen cooperation in the international arena.

Furthermore, in addition to concurring on holding foreign ministers' meetings with the GCC on a regular basis, I also held a meeting with Secretary General Hissein Brahim Taha of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The OIC, with its membership of 57 Islamic countries and regions, plays an active role in eliminating violent extremism and has a great influence on stabilizing the Middle East region. I will continue to hold dialogues and work closely with these regional organizations.

The fourth and last outcome is the strengthened exchange of soft power. While visiting various countries around the world, I witnessed first-hand how the ties between people and cultures strengthen the ties between countries. The leaders of the three Gulf countries and I shared the view that we will aim to significantly increase the number of international students coming to Japan from these countries, which had decreased due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while further deepening exchanges in areas of the so-called soft power, such as culture, sports, education and science.

Promoting multilayered cooperation in a wide range of areas, including energy, multilateral economic relations, security and soft power exchanges. Having the common goal of maintaining a free and open international order based on the rule of law as its base. It was very meaningful



Prime Minister Kishida attended the Japan-UAE Business Forum and stated that Japan will actively support the promotion of investment between the two countries.



Top and right: One of the participants of the economic mission was Alhytec Inc., an environmental venture that has created an innovative method for using waste aluminum chips to produce hydrogen. Bottom: Japan's Mitsubishi Chemical Group Corporation, Inpex Corporation and Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company, Masdar, announced at the Japan-UAE Business Forum that they had agreed to conduct a joint feasibility study for a carbon recycling chemicals project, including production of the world's first commercial-scale polypropylene from CO₂ and green hydrogen. EPA-JUJI



that I was able to confirm these principles during the visit, also in terms of carrying on and spreading the fruitful discussions held at the G7 Hiroshima Summit.

Even after autumn, we will have a series of opportunities to engage in dialogue with international partners and confirm our solidarity, such as the G20 New Delhi Summit, the United Nations General Assembly, the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) Summit, and the Japan-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Special Summit Meeting. As G7 Chair, Japan will share the outcome of the G7 Hiroshima Summit with countries around the world and lead the international community over a one-year period. I will firmly continue what I have done during my visit to the Middle East at future diplomatic occasions, and will steadily transform such efforts into the security and prosperity of Japan and the stability and prosperity of the international community.

Thank you very much.