

EURO-GULF MONITOR

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EGIC
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WEEK IN BRIEF

1. The EU praised the new government formation in Yemen and Saudi Arabia's efforts towards peace.
2. The GCC countries began their COVID-19 vaccination campaigns.
3. Google and Saudi Aramco inked a strategic deal for a new cloud region in Saudi Arabia.
4. Qatar and Russia discussed bilateral cooperation and developments in the Gulf Crisis, Syria, Palestine and Iran files.
5. Jordanian King Abdullah II Al-Hussein discussed Palestine and regional security with Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa.



ROUND & ABOUT THE GULF

KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

Sunday, 27 December–Bahrain hosted an online meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries' Foreign Ministers ahead of the 41st GCC Summit scheduled for 5 January, in which members should discuss ending the Gulf rift, among other issues. The Kingdom will assume the GCC presidency from January 2021.

STATE OF KUWAIT

Monday, 21 December–Kuwait announced that it will close its land, sea and air borders from 21 December to 1 January 2021 as a precautionary measure to curb the spread of COVID-19. Similar measures were announced by Saudi Arabia's government, which announced the closure of its borders for seven days from 22 December.

SULTANATE OF OMAN

Sunday, 27 December–Oman launched its COVID-19 vaccination campaign with the first doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech started to be injected to priority groups of people. 15,600 doses were dispatched to the country the previous week and 28,000 are expected to be delivered in January. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE also began their vaccination processes the previous week.

STATE OF QATAR

Monday, 21 December–The Qatar Foundation and Italy's major bank, Intesa Sanpaolo, signed a Letter of Intent to encourage cooperation among the two countries in business innovation. The agreement aims to strengthen industrial relations and cooperation between their high-tech small and medium enterprises.

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Monday, 21 December–Google Cloud and Saudi Aramco Development Company signed an agreement to establish a cloud region in the Kingdom to expand cloud services offers to enterprise customers in the country. The agreement is in line with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 innovation objectives.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Monday, 21 December–The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) signed an exploration concession deal with the Italian Eni Abu Dhabi and Thai PTTEP MENA. The two companies will invest about \$412 million (USD) in exploring oil and gas opportunities in Abu Dhabi's offshore Block 3, maintaining a production right in case of commercial discoveries. ADNOC will retain the option to hold a 60% stake in the production phase.



- Saturday, 19 December–The European Union embraced the proclamation of the new government in Yemen as an essential step towards the resolution of the conflict. The EU also praised Saudi Arabia for its mediation achievements and advocated the implementation of the Riyadh Agreement, aimed at ending power struggle in Yemen.



- Monday, 21 December–The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, chaired a virtual meeting of the parties to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The members stressed the importance of the deal for nuclear non-proliferation and the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the implementation of the agreed commitments.



- Tuesday, 22 December–The European Union welcomed the appointment of Ambassador Tor Wennesland as the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process. The EU confirmed its commitment to a two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and reaffirmed the role of the EU and the UN in the Middle East Quartet.



- Tuesday, 22 December–On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the Paris Climate Agreement, the Head of the EU Delegation to Saudi Arabia, Patrick Simonnet, praised Saudi Arabia for its commitment to countering climate change. In the context of Saudi Vision 2030, the country undertook a process of energy transition aimed at reducing the greenhouse gas emissions and producing 50% of its power consumption from renewable sources within 2030.

KEY OFFICIAL VISITS

- Monday, 21 December–Jordan’s King Abdullah II Al-Hussein met with Bahrain’s King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa in Manama. They discussed developments in the Palestinian issue and the need for cooperation in promoting international security and stability.



- Monday, 21 December–Oman’s Foreign Minister, Badr bin Hamad Al-Busaidi, visited Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, where he met with his counterparts, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud and Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. The discussions covered regional and international developments of mutual interest.

- Monday, 21 December–Italy’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Luigi Di Maio, met with Qatar’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, in Doha. They discussed the Libyan file and cooperation in defence and counterterrorism. They also signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the Italy-Qatar Strategic Dialogue, aiming to boost cooperation in several fields, such as investment, energy, technology, food security and trade.



- Tuesday, 22 December–Qatar’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohamed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, visited Moscow, where he met with Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Yury Borisov, and with Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov. They discussed bilateral cooperation in economy and investment and reviewed the developments related to the Gulf Crisis, Syria, Palestine, Libya and Iran.

