

Cooperation between the EU and the Arab Peninsula can be a win-win

Brussels, 22 November 2011 – A meeting on “Science Diplomacy with the Arab Peninsula” chaired by **Angelika Niebler**, MEP, and in the attendance of **Sulaiman Hamid Almazroui**, United Arab Emirates Ambassador to Belgium, and **Dr Husam Sultan Al-Ulama**, Director of National Research Foundation, UAE, was held on Tuesday, 22 November, in the European Parliament. The purpose of the meeting was to identify an optimal format for scientific dialogue between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the EU.

One of the major UAE strategic directions in building a competitive knowledge economy is promotion and enhancement of research and development capabilities, as well as encouragement of cooperation with international institutions in innovation and applied research. **Dr Sehamuddin Galadari**, Vice Provost for Research, United Arab Emirates University, stressed that Europe and the Arab Peninsula are well positioned for collaboration and that “existing cooperation between regions is good, but only on individual level and without any continuous collaboration in research.”

At the meeting the possibilities for R&D collaboration in biological and medical science between two regions were explored. **Dr Kenneth Wilson**, senior advisor at National Research Foundation, UAE, sees an opportunity in addressing global health challenges together with European partners. To do so, access to new emerging medical and health science research platforms and involvement in major research projects is crucial: “A strong, coherent and transparent policy framework to support global research in medical and health sciences, and instruments that enable this, are needed”. Wilson added that what medical and health science researchers from GCC need are instruments to help them participate in the EU medical, biological and health science infrastructures.

Research infrastructures create an opportunity to raise science capability and establish global standards in medical sciences. **Prof Kurt Zatloukal**, Medical University of Graz and Coordinator of Biobanking and Biomolecular Resources Research Infrastructure (BBMRI), addressed cooperation in the biological and medical sciences, with a particular emphasis on the BBMRI and the IT Future of Medicine (ITFoM) pilot project as examples of potential collaboration: “BBMRI provides key resources to link and support progress in health, innovation and research. We have to see how this EU framework we created allows us to establish new partnerships with other regions of the world.” **Dr Sehamuddin Galadari** added “it is

the right time to start cooperation in the field of biomedicine and biological research, since related legislation and policies are being established both in the EU and UAE.”

Markus Pasterk, International Prevention Research Institute, agreed: “Ageing societies, public health and pandemics are areas where the EU and the Arab Peninsula have similar challenges. The EU developed a framework to tackle these problems, but the EU cannot save the world within its own limitations. We need to talk with neighbouring regions and agree on coordination process that will allow comparison and exchange of medical data and samples.” **Prof Kurt Zatloukal** added that “cooperation in BBMRI is relevant to both, the Gulf Region and the EU. Both could benefit from it. It is a win-win scenario.”

Speakers at the meeting announced that a major event will take place in Dubai next year. This event will showcase the pre-competitive, innovation enhancing European infrastructure R&D platforms in bio banking and ITFoM to potential Arab Peninsula partners. **Angelika Niebler**, Chair of the European Parliament Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula, was supportive of such an event, which already has a high level commitment from Europe to participate.

Notes to Editors

National Research Foundation, UAE, was established in March 2008 as a Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research initiative. It helps promoting research activity in private and public universities, colleges, centres, institutes and companies, by individuals or teams of researchers in UAE. NRF has been established to provide research leadership in the country and to provide funding support on a competitive basis. It supports research projects that survive international peer review, contribute social and economic benefits to UAE, and enhance the development process in the country.

More information at www.nrf.ae

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