

GCC Opening Statement

Statement of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) at the Opening Session of the Yemen Consultative Group Meeting

**Lancaster House, London
15 November 2006**

**Your Excellency President Ali Abdallah Saleh, President of the
Republic of Yemen
Your Highnesses and Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is my great privilege to speak before you at the opening of this GCC-sponsored conference to support the economic development of Yemen. The close ties between Yemen and GCC countries go well beyond geography and common interests, to kinship, history and culture.

The leaders of the GCC made a historical decision in the December 2001 summit by inviting Yemen to join a number of GCC specialized agencies and adopting a mechanism to transform the traditional ties between the two sides through active cooperation in all fields, especially in the economic field. Last December, the GCC Summit adopted another important decision, to hold a joint meeting of the foreign ministers of Yemen and the GCC, whom met last March. The idea of a donors' conference sponsored by the GCC was born at

that meeting. A joint technical committee was formed to study Yemen's development needs and translate it into a working plan and time-specific programs, and present that plan to this conference in order to establish new channels for financing development projects in Yemen.

Over the past months, a significant number of important studies were completed about Yemen's development requirements and economic reforms. An ambitious investment program for the next four years has also been prepared for presentation to your conference. It includes scores of important development projects and their financing needs. The joint committee has also covered a lot of ground in studying appropriate mechanisms to support Yemen's capacity to absorb external aid and the ability to carry out those projects in a timely fashion, consistent with the timetable set forth in the investment program.

**Your Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

This conference is a significant undertaking to provide for the development needs of Yemen – significant not only in the size of pledges – which we hope will be generous, but also in the long-term partnership that we trust will be established between Yemen and the donors to fund development in Yemen in an efficient and transparent economic climate, in light of the economic reforms that Yemen has introduced started to implement. We therefore look at this conference not as an end, but as an important step at the beginning of the road.

The National Reform Agenda which Yemen has introduced represents a significant ingredient to achieve its development goals and enhance its human development indicators, especially in education, health and enabling women to participate more effectively in the

development of the country. Those reforms include independence of the oversight and accountability government bodies, reform of public tender and government procurement mechanisms, and joining the Initiative for Transparency in Extractive Industries, as well enhancing independence of the judiciary and freedom of the press.

This conference is an important indicator for international support of the Yemeni economy and I am confident that it will have a significant impact on encouraging business leaders to invest in Yemen. For their part, the GCC countries and Yemen are organizing a conference scheduled for next February in Yemen to explore investment opportunities in Yemen and establish partnerships between private actors in Yemen and other countries to take advantage of those great opportunities and build on what your conference is going to provide in terms of official assistance.

Finally, I would like to thank the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the United Kingdom for the great preparations for this conference, in close and effective partnership with their counterparts in the Yemeni government and members of the Technical Committee and Task Force from the GCC Secretariat, ministries of finance and foreign affairs and development funds, in addition to the World Bank, UNDP, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Islamic Bank for Development. The success of this conference represents a qualitative leap in the value of joint work for the benefit of development in Yemen. We hope that this partnership will continue after the conference.