

HE Anas K. Al Saleh, **Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Investment Authority** - US Chamber of Commerce
Wednesday September 6, 2017

Thank you Tom for hosting this event.

[Note: Thomas Donohue is the President and CEO of the US Chamber of Commerce TBC]

[Note: Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce. He may attend the event TBC]

I am delighted that Secretary Ross was able to take time off his busy schedule to attend.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen. Good morning and thank you for hosting us today.

I will use my time this morning to update you on the latest fiscal and legislative reforms taking place in Kuwait, including our new investment promotion program, which i'm sure many of you will be interested to know more about.

I will then change hats briefly and speak to you as chair of the Kuwait Investment Authority to highlight our commitment to the US private sector.

But before I start I would like to take a moment to recognize the US government, and every member of the US armed services for their vital role and sacrifice in the liberation of my country.

Last Aug 2nd.A little over a month ago ... Marked the 27th anniversary of the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

(Pause)

Next February 26th – we will celebrate the 27th anniversary of the **Liberation** of Kuwait.

If there are any Gulf War veterans in the audience ...thank you.

(Pause)

Ladies and gentlemen ...

As you know ...Kuwait and the other GCC countries are facing economic and fiscal challenges from persistent low oil prices.

As you also know, Kuwait's current financial position is strong,

Yet ... despite this strong position, there is a need **...and political will now** ... to balance our fiscal accounts ... by controlling public spending on the one hand,

and, on the other hand, diversifying the state's revenue streams ...away from oil.

Significant efforts and successes have already been made on this reform journey.

About a year ago we started the implementation of our National Program for Economic and Fiscal Sustainability.

A key objective of the program... is to accelerate the growth of the non-oil economy and empower the private sector to take the lead.

In this regard, the government outlined a 25-year national privatisation strategy, with a first-stage priority to privatize infrastructure facilities and projects such as power generation, ports, airports and telecom infrastructure.

In parallel, we are also working on supporting these initiatives with the necessary legislative framework to create an efficient business environment to attract more foreign investment

... and it is working.

Global companies from across the world are actively taking part in these opportunities ...operating locally through different models, including

The PPP model, with companies like the France-headquartered company - Engie,

And the 100% direct foreign ownership model, like Microsoft and GE.

As you can see, our business environment is making **leaps** of progress,

leaps backed with
political will,
sound economic policy, underpinned by an advanced banking
system
and a clear legal framework

For example, we recently launched a “one-stop shop” for foreign investors and companies who wish to establish 100% owned entities in Kuwait.

This “shop” is the Kuwait Direct Investments Promotion Authority ...or KDIPA for short. Though still in its early years ... KDIPA was recently recognized by the US State Department in its 2017 report titled “Investment Climate in Kuwait”. This recognition is a direct result of our significant efforts in promoting and encouraging inward investments by making the domestic environment more business friendly.

Today...

IBM,

HUAWEI,

GE,

Microsoft, and many more ...all have 100%-owned licenses and operations in the country, with free transfer of capital ...and earnings,

All tax-free.

There are numerous opportunities, and benefits, for all types of American businesses and service-providers to be based in Kuwait, to serve Kuwait primarily and even act as platform for serving neighboring countries as well.

If anyone in the audience is interested to know more, go to kdipa.gov.kw - they have an impressive track-record of processing licenses and in record time.

I had said earlier that I will be changing hats before I conclude.

As Minister of Finance, I also chair the Kuwait's foreign investment vehicle ... the Kuwait Investment Authority, ...The "KIA" is not only a prudent ... responsible investor seeking viable opportunities across the world for the benefit of the Kuwaiti people and their future. But also a facilitator for economic growth in some of the world's largest economies.

In the U.S., we've been an active investor in the private sector for close to 60 years now, and with success. We have offices in Atlanta and New York ..through our real estate arm Fosterlane, and another office in New York through Wafra Investments - our sister investment company that's owned by Kuwait's Public Institute for Social Security.

And we've invested in literally hundreds of American companies,

and we've done so ... responsibly, prudently, and ethically.

(Pause)

We've always believe in the US Investment landscape, both in good times and in bad times.

In 2008 and 2009, when the financial crisis hit .. we had a responsibility to help bolster the economy and bring it back from the brink.

As we all recall, the outlook was grim, capital was depleted, new capital was scarce, and the collapse of the modern financial model was deemed imminent by many.

But we believed then ...as we do now... that the US economy is resilient ...and we trusted then as we trust now that when times are turbulent...the U.S. would deploy the right economic policy to stabilize the economy and gradually bring it back to growth.

Today, the U.S. is KIA's most important investment destination, and the largest with over 50% of our investments deployed here. We have over 400 billion dollars invested in the U.S. economy across all asset classes, industries and sectors.

This, by the way, **excludes** the substantial investments made by Kuwait's private sector and private entities.

(Pause)

In the last 20 years, KIA's investments in the US have grown by nearly 20 times.

Looking forward, I hope to see our U.S.-based investments grow by another 20 folds in the coming two decades as we see significant opportunities to invest in, especially in US infrastructure, real estate, and real estate development and financing.

Ladies and gentlemen, the unbreakable bond between our two countries was earned by both sides over decades of hard work by those who preceded us, from policy makers to business professionals.

A bond built on shared interests.

Business interests

Social interests

Diplomatic interests

and political interests.

It is a bond that is also based on flows of trade and commerce, and the exchange of ideas... today this bond has grown and evolved to include **an exchange of ...business opportunities between the two countries.**

And speaking of opportunities, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak, and I look forward to welcoming you soon in Kuwait.

(ENDS)