



Speech of His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during a lunch banquet held in honor of Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London

Monday, on the 11th of November 2013

In the name of Allah the Merciful, and peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Muhammad and his family and companions,

H.E Mr. Jassim Mohammed Abdul Mohsen Al-Kharafi,
President of the National Assembly from 1999 to 2012,
H.E Mr. Boris Johnson and his delegation,
Their Excellencies the Sheikhs,
Their Excellencies the Ministers,
Their Excellencies the Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a particular pleasure for me to welcome to Kuwait Mr. Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London.

The Mayor is certainly a familiar figure in the United Kingdom and in British politics. He is also a well-known figure outside the UK. We in Kuwait are honoured that the Mayor has chosen to come to Kuwait and learn about our beautiful and vibrant young nation.

As many of us know, today - the 11th November - has a special significance in both Kuwait and the UK. It is the day when, across the land, the people of the United Kingdom remember those who died in the service of the British Crown. It was instituted after the First World War and was known as 'Armistice Day': the moment in 1918 - at the eleventh hour, on the eleventh day, of the eleventh month - when that terrible global conflict, with its huge loss of human life, finally came to an end.

Today, Nov. 11 provides an opportunity for those in the UK and around the world to cherish the memory of those who have fallen and to give thanks for the ultimate sacrifice they have made for their country, regardless of the conflict. And this morning, at 11 am GMT,



in British towns, villages and cities, many spontaneously paused in their busy lives in a silent and moving act of remembrance.

Mr. Mayor, the people of Kuwait also remember conflict and sacrifice. We have been threatened with invasion several times, not least at the moment of our nation's birth. And then, just over twenty years ago, we were the victims of unprovoked aggression. Our land was occupied and laid waste, our people suffered. And it was at these times that our British allies stood by us; and when the time came for us to regain our freedom and throw off oppression, it was the Coalition forces which came to our aid.

So we in Kuwait also remember the call of duty and the selfless sacrifice of those beyond our borders who fought in the cause of freedom. We remember - and, today of all days, we thank our British friends for their sacrifice on our behalf.

Mr. Mayor, I also proudly and proudly mention that today, the 11th of November is also important to Kuwaitis because some 51 years ago, the Kuwaiti Constitution was brought to light, guaranteeing our citizens the right to grow and prosper and to have a say in our future. Following the principles established by the Magna Carta in England in 1215, it provided a model for legalizing government actions and activities.

We are blessed to have His Highness, the Emir Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad, as one of the founding fathers who helped shape the Constitution and who was also the architect for the Kuwaiti foreign policy for more than 50 years earning the title of "The Dean of the Foreign Ministers" around the world.

Mr. Mayor, we welcome you today in a number of different respects: first, as an outstanding British politician; second, as the representative of one of the world's greatest capital cities; and, third, in recognising the importance of your mission, which is to strengthen the commercial, economic and cultural bonds that bind our two nations.

Let me briefly address these in turn.



First, Mr. Mayor, we salute you as a commanding figure in British politics. While you were elected to the British Parliament comparatively recently - in 2001 - you quickly joined the front ranks of the Conservative Party, then the official opposition. In 2008, you took the momentous decision to seek the Conservative nomination for Mayor of London and were successful in that effort. Four years later, on the eve of the London Olympics, you were again re-elected Mayor of London by its people. And there are many who expect you to return to parliament in due course because of your love for the country.

Without doubt, you are a supreme communicator, whether by speech or through the written word. You are a unique politician. You care little for political correctness, but care greatly for the people and can identify their needs.

Second, I would like to say something about that great city you represent – London.

Kuwait has long enjoyed special links with the City of London, the capital's historic and financial heart. A few months ago, for example, we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the Kuwait Investment Office. The KIO now manages billions of dollars globally, and roughly 20% of that is done in the United Kingdom in all manner of assets and commercial activities. And it is a two-way relationship, with many British businesses playing an increasing role in Kuwait's development.

The 'Square Mile' is indeed an essential part of what London has to offer. Yet London is more than its financial sector, as globally significant as it is. It is more, even, than its heritage and historic sites, its many beautiful buildings and parks, its world-class restaurants and theatres.

London's status as perhaps the world's greatest international city lies in its astonishing diversity and its openness to the world. This is surely the source of its energy and vibrancy, the human creativity and innovation which gives the capital its vitality. That is why many Kuwaitis have such strong connections to this, their global home.



But it was not always so. Thirty years ago, London had lost a quarter of its population and seemed to be in decline. Yet the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics showed the world the dazzling transformation that was possible.

Mr. Mayor, you were not a competitor in the London Games. Sadly, there was no sporting category for 'freestyle urban cycling', which I know is your passion. But you were then - and are today - the face of London. Like the city you represent, you are confident, energetic, and open to the world and the creative power of change. And the brilliance of London, of course, is hugely important to the growth and prosperity of the United Kingdom.

That brings me to my third and final point: to say a few words about your mission here in Kuwait, Mr. Mayor.

I mentioned earlier the work of the Kuwait Investment Office, through its office in London, and the strong bonds that exist with the UK's financial services sector.

But of course our economic and commercial linkages extend as far back as 1792, to the foundation of the first British trading post in Kuwait.

Today, Kuwait is the UK's third largest trading partner among the GCC countries. The Gulf as a whole is the UK's seventh largest export market. In 2011, the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, announced his aim of doubling bilateral trade by 2015. Substantial progress is already being made towards that goal.

As to Kuwait, the economy has continued to expand. Sustained growth has generated significant budget surpluses and high levels of prosperity, with Kuwait enjoying one of the highest GDP per capita ratios in the world.

Yet there is much still to do. Kuwait needs to renew and diversify its economy. That is why we have embarked on an ambitious National Development Plan. It aims to make Kuwait a logistical, financial and



trading hub, with major infrastructure development and increased capacity.

In partnership with the Kuwait parliament, the government is constructing a new framework of laws to create an enabling environment. In encouraging entrepreneurship and private enterprise, we want to diversify the economy, increase the size of the private sector and boost the opportunities for foreign investment. In all this, we look to a developing partnership with the United Kingdom. British businesses have already won substantial contracts for projects in Kuwait's oil, gas and construction sectors and there are around 6,000 British nationals currently working in the country.

But it is not only in infrastructure development and increased trade and investment - we also recognize that the UK has much to offer in helping expand our skills base, particularly in education and health.

In all these ways, Mr. Mayor, we can build a deeper and more productive partnership between our two countries. Your visit this time may be short; but there is a great deal to do and we want to work with you.

Mr. Mayor...

I know in your country it is somewhat of a tradition to give a visiting dignitary a "key to the city"... and we did consider that... but I'm sure you know Kuwait is historically known as a city of many gates... and when we added up the number of gates we had... and then the number of keys it would take to open them all, it was obvious that things just would not work out... it was just too heavy and too bulky...

But rest assured, the doors and gates of Kuwait are always open to you... and we welcome you here.

Mr. Mayor, we thank you for sharing your ideas as to how we can work together in making our world better for our peoples. And we look forward to the rest of your visit. Thank you.