



**Speech of His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad
Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of the
visit of the Mayor of the City Geneva to Kuwait**

Monday, 14 November 2016

His Excellency Mr. Guillaume Barazzone, Mayor of the City of Geneva,

His Beatitude Ibrahim Isaac, Coptic Catholic Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and all Africa,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome our guest Mr. Guillaume Barazzone, Mayor of the City of Geneva, and his delegation who are visiting Kuwait on an official invitation to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Switzerland. However, our trading relationships began a long time before this day; during the 19th century, Kuwaiti merchants exported valuable pearls to the Swiss market; during the 1950s, Kuwaiti traders contributed to the opening of Gulf markets to Swiss products. During the 1960s, Kuwait began to strengthen its diplomatic relations with Switzerland. In 1966, I was appointed as the first Kuwaiti diplomat, the consul-general for the Swiss Confederation, resident in Geneva, and the Permanent Representative of the European Office of the United Nations, given that I had acquired my culture and my education in your city Geneva, as I studied and graduated from the prestigious University of Geneva, founded in 1559. During the period of my work in Switzerland, the experience of Swiss companies in the technical field contributed to the development of Kuwait's infrastructure, which encouraged the Swiss government to open an embassy in Kuwait in 1975.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

The diplomatic relationship between our two countries is not the only one to be strong and solid. Switzerland has become one of the favoured countries for Kuwaiti businessmen, especially the city of Geneva, thanks to its secure financial environment and its fair and equitable judicial system, which made it one of the most suitable places to host international arbitration for over a hundred years. Swiss cities generally hold the first or second place among the most favourable places in the world for this type of arbitration, according to the estimates of the International Chamber of Commerce, ICC. It is for this reason that the city of Lausanne was chosen to be the seat of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). This fair and impartial environment has made Switzerland the recipient for 30% of the total cross-border assets of the world. According to the American consulting firm "Boston Consulting Group", Switzerland occupies the first place globally for attracting and receiving 2.2 trillion dollars of foreign wealth. Above all this, Switzerland is the favoured country of Kuwaiti tourists; its picturesque nature, its ancient and historic cities, its refined lifestyle and its luxury markets have attracted the Kuwaiti people. During the last few years, the number of Kuwaiti tourists in Switzerland reached almost 40,000 visitors. Over the recent years, a large number of Muslim tourists haven't interrupted their summer holidays during the month of Ramadan due to the respect of religions that distinguishes your country. Over the last few years, most hotels across Switzerland have dedicated a prayer room for their Muslim guests and have begun offering Iftar (Ramadan dinner that begins after sunset) and Suhur (a meal served before the Sunrise) to those who fast during Ramadan. This is only a reflection of the distinguished relationship between the two friendly countries.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our diplomatic relations have undergone remarkable development in the recent years. This was reflected in the mutual visits of senior government and parliamentary officials and by the signing of agreements demonstrating the good understanding between our two countries on many levels. Personally, I am proud of my official visit to the city of Bern in 2011, where I met the President of the Swiss Confederation. I had the pleasure of visiting the Swiss parliament and meeting with its president, as well as meeting with the Mayor of Berne. Relations between the two countries continue to witness great cooperation in several areas. The agreements signed with the Swiss government during the last years in the financial, legal and political domains reflect the good understanding between the two countries, which we are relying on to push forward these distinguished relations.

Mr. Mayor,

We will never forget the position of our friends during Saddam Hussein's aggression against Kuwait in 1990. We will never forget your position supporting Kuwait during its crisis and your support to our people during their endurance, by constantly demanding the application of international laws and conventions to end the aggression. We will never forget Switzerland's position towards Kuwait, nor how the city of Geneva responded to our suffering during the invasion of Saddam Hussein by opening the doors of its schools to our children and providing free services to all Kuwaitis residing in its territory. We will never forget the position of the Swiss government regarding the issue of prisoners and missing persons through the efforts made by the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank you all for being here today, and I would like to welcome again the guests of Kuwait, Mr. Guillaume Barazzone, and



his delegation. I wish them a successful visit, and I praise all the efforts aiming to strengthen the relationship between our two countries.