



**British Embassy
Damascus**

Foreword

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The British Foreign Secretary's visit to Syria in November 2008 marked a welcome stage of increased engagement at high level between both governments. Regional developments have opened the way for improved dialogue between Syria and a range of European

governments in recent months. This offers a basis for Syria to play an increased international role, both political and economic.

There is a real opportunity to build on this dialogue and for the quality of our exchanges to improve over the year ahead, to open new doors and deepen existing engagements, across the full range of exchanges between Syria and the UK in trade, investment, education and culture. Our team at the British Embassy in Damascus stand ready to offer you advice and support, through our trade & investment operation and also where necessary through our political and consular colleagues.

Syria is making substantial advances in public sector reform. We are keen to support this work across a range of Government Departments. You will find details in this edition of In Focus in Syria/UK of how we do this through a variety of projects. The UK Department of Health signed a Memorandum of Understanding last August with the UK Department of Health. You can read about the initial work we are doing as a result on page 26. The British Council, on behalf of the UK Ministry of Education, also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Syrian Ministry of Education this year. We feature other Embassy projects on governance in the municipalities and awareness of human rights of women.

The British Syrian Society have been very active in the last year and contributed substantially to developments in a range of areas including Banking and Law. Take a look at page 28 to find out more. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the British Syrian Society in 2009.

Whatever your interest in relations between the UK and Syria, I hope you will find something in these pages that encourages you to deepen your engagement over the coming months.