

# Looking to the next generation

## THE YOUTH FORUM

By Samar Fatany, Saudi Coordinator of the UK Saudi Arabia Youth Forum

Both Foreign Ministers, addressing the leaders of the both nations' business communities, commended the achievements of the Youth Forum and praised the continued meetings between the young people, which have provided them with excellent opportunities to get better acquainted with one another and to better understand varied views of the future.

The Saudi and British youths were inspired by the speeches of their Foreign Ministers during the closing session of the fourth meeting of the Two Kingdoms Dialogue that was held in Riyadh on April 8. They outlined their recommendations on building trust and understanding between the two nations and called for greater participation of the youth in the decision-making process.

During the closing session, the Ministers watched a short film documenting the young peoples' efforts in building a constructive dialogue between the two Kingdoms during the Youth Forum meeting that was held 10-16 Jan in Jeddah and Riyadh. The Committee of International Trade (CIT) in the Council of Saudi Chambers of Commerce and Industry organised and funded the seven-day event in cooperation with the British Youth Council and under the patronage of the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The film, which was produced by the young participants, highlighted the debate and constructive dialogue between the Saudi/British group and demonstrated their willingness to build trust and understanding, erase misconceptions and dispel negative attitudes. It captured the lively and very productive workshops. The young ones also had the opportunity to discuss matters of mutual concerns and controversial issues including the concept of jihad, Islamic jurisprudence, racism, extremism, the consequences of Islamophobia, and the threat of terrorism.

Participants discussed



joint projects that could reinforce the participation of youth in dialogue between the two cultures. The projects were very ambitious and constructive. They include a project developed by The Mouth That Roars, Fainak and the Youth Empowerment organisation called "Our Everyday Lives Project," which celebrates Saudi and British cultures through film and photography. Another project called "Active Students in Dialogue" involves European Alternatives, Effat University, The National Dialogue Center and The British Youth Council. The project aims to develop a multilingual guidance manual to build relationships among students at different universities in the UK and Saudi Arabia.

A website has also been launched. Developed by The British Youth Council, Fainak and Effat University, it can be found at [www.2Kingdomsyouth.org](http://www.2Kingdomsyouth.org)

Officials from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the British Embassy, who attended the closing ceremony, later listened to the recommendations of the young people calling for stronger youth participation in their nations' development, and an opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process of their countries. The young participants who were very eloquent and commanded great communication skills left a very good impression on everyone present. They were indeed the promising leaders of tomorrow.

— Samar Fatany is a Saudi radio journalist.

