



FROM THE CHAIR

At the October Board Meeting it was agreed to formally write to the Ambassador on behalf of all three British Business Groups in the Kingdom to raise the issue of the ease, or lack thereof, of availability of business visit visas to Saudi Arabia. As this matter was being attended to notification was received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website that, with effect 26 October, business travellers no longer need to provide invitation letters from the host company in Saudi Arabia or from the Saudi Chambers of Commerce. Instead they only need to provide an introductory letter from their company confirming that they are going to Saudi Arabia on a business trip. In addition and importantly business travellers should now also be able to obtain multiple entry visas for up to one year. In furtherance of the promotion of British business in the Kingdom and to the further promotion of Saudi British relations this is a positive step and should be welcomed. In the light of this positive development I would ask all members to keep the RGBB and indeed the Embassy informed of the success or otherwise of this new process. (Further details are available on the MOFA website <http://www.mofa.gov.sa/Detail.asp?InSectionID=6200&InNewsItemID=100839>)

At the end of September I attended, on behalf of the RGBB, the Intergulf 09 Meeting in Muscat - this was a meeting of representatives of the various British Business Groups within the GCC and held in conjunction with the Gulf Commercial Officers Conference. This gathering went well and useful discussions were held between the various delegates and also with the UKTI teams. Proposed action plans are being developed by both parties to ensure that

the conference results in benefits and added value to all concerned. With regard to the British Business Groups, matters under discussion included revising the various constitutions to have common aims and to consider an umbrella website for all Groups. With regard to UKTI, matters to be considered included greater co-ordination between UKTI and the Business Groups with regard to conferences; greater use by Embassies of Groups and networks for inward and outward missions; link UKTI and Group websites; UKTI contacts in UK to be shared; market feedback from Groups through Embassies to UKTI; greater co-operation on specific sector opportunities and more feedback from Groups to UKTI. As you will note the proposed matters for development are many and the RGBB awaits formal proposals. Whilst I was happy to endorse on behalf of the RGBB the intent and direction of such ideas - indeed the RGBB supports any initiative which results in the further promotion of British business interests in the region, I did sound a note of caution reminding both Commercial Officers and fellow Business Group representatives that here in Saudi Arabia the British Business Groups are entirely voluntary organizations operating under the auspices of and in conjunction with the British Embassy and with relatively modest resources at their disposal. Any formal proposals received will be reviewed by the Board, the BBA in Khobar and BBG in Jeddah to ensure that prior to formal commitment or approval that such proposals will be within our cost capabilities; be meaningful to members and others and to be sustainable into the future. To give an idea of the difference of scope or scale of the various GCC British business groups I detail overleaf a summary of activities of the various groups:

The RGBB 2009-2010 Board

The RGBB Secretary, Jane Brierley can be contacted on tel: 00966 1 488 00 77 ext. 2263 on Saturdays or secretary@rgbb.org



Owain Raw-Rees
Chairman
owain.raw-rees@axa-gulf.com



Luke Bowen
Magazine & Advertising
luke@arabianc.com



Ian Hay
Special Briefings



Marcus Cleverton
Treasurer
marcuscleverton@sabb.com



Ian Crawford
Deputy Chairman
Ian.Crawford@baesystems.com



Gary Richardson
Sports
richardsonsa@hotmail.co.uk



Nicola Quick
SIGS & Website
nicola.quick@talk21.com



Paul Williams
Embassy Representative
paul.williams2@fco.gov.uk