

Intergulf, which brings together representatives of the UK (Embassy Commercial Sections, British Council offices and British Business Groups or BBGs) in the Gulf countries including Iran and Yemen, met on 13/14 November 2002 in Bahrain, under the Chairmanship of Sir David Gore-Booth, Special Adviser to the Chairman of HSBC.

With Mick Brown tied up with his day job, the RGBB were ably represented by David Burton of The British Council in Riyadh. Unfortunately I managed to delete the report David sent me about the event just before going to press, so instead and with apologies to David, I'm running just a few brief notes extracted from the 49 page conference minutes. Should anyone want a copy of the whole 9yards please drop me a line on andrew@sbttd.co.uk and I'll email a copy!

The following conclusions were adopted unanimously:

Intergulf is a worthwhile tool for exchanging views and experience among BBGs and with TPUK, the British Council and relevant Trade Associations in order to increase the UK's exports of goods and services to the Gulf.

Intergulf recognises the increased importance of UK-provided education and training as a means both of strengthening links between the GCC and the UK, especially among the younger generation, and of increasing UK invisible earnings: the British Council will consult BBGs and TPUK on its new Middle East education strategy.

Intergulf notes the importance of cultivating young Gulf nationals in order to increase their awareness of what Britain has to offer the successor generation.

Intergulf appreciates the growing role played by women in the societies and economics of the Gulf and appreciates the need to take more account of this in targeting activities such as missions and exhibitions.

Intergulf regards the involvement of the Royal Family, especially HRH The Duke of York in his trade capacity, and of Ministers as adding value to their efforts to promote British business in the region.

Intergulf accepts that BBGs will need to maintain a reasonable balance between business and social activities depending largely on the prevailing environment in each host country and bearing in mind that while their prime objective is commercial they also provide valuable social cement for the British communities in the Gulf countries.

Intergulf recommends that BBGs should communicate more automatically between each other in between annual Intergulfs and six monthly meetings of their Chairmen by exchanging newsletters, e-mails or faxes: these could be aggregated in reports to each other and to London covering main local and regional developments.

Intergulf reconfirmed that its meeting in 2003 would be hosted by Dubai and in 2004 by Oman: the possibility of holding Intergulf 2005 in Iran, which was becoming an increasingly interesting market, should be kept under review.



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