

# KUWAIT MARKS 2ND ANNIVERSARY OF AMIR AS A 'HUMANITARIAN LEADER'

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait today marks the 2nd anniversary of the UN honoring of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a "Humanitarian Leader" and Kuwait as a "Humanitarian Center." The honoring came in recognition of the major role of Kuwait and His Highness the Amir for reinforcing a "humanitarian diplomacy" and supporting charity work that was extended around the globe. His Highness the Amir was honored in a ceremony held at the UN headquarters in New York on Sept 9.

During the ceremony, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon lauded the great humanitarian efforts His Highness the Amir had exerted, enabling the international organization to face the repercussions of war and catastrophes. "We thank the Amir and the people of Kuwait for their outstanding generosity towards people in need," said the Secretary-General then. Ban added that Kuwait had increased its support to multilateral humanitarian action exponentially since the start of the crisis in Syria.

In addition, the country donated hundreds of millions of dollars for humanitarian operations - "not only in the Middle East, but in Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan. Kuwait's leadership and funding has saved lives, and has galvanized others to participate in coordinated humanitarian action." He noted that Kuwait's initiatives had prompted the international community to offer more aid, which helped the UN fulfill its humanitarian missions worldwide.

## Providing assistance

For his part, His Highness the Amir stressed that Kuwait, since independence and gaining the UN membership, had followed a steady approach in its foreign policy, essentially based on humanitarian assistance to countries in need "regardless of their geographic location, religious beliefs or ethnic origins". This assistance is in "pursuance of its belief and conviction of the importance of international partnership, as well as the unification and activation of international efforts, aimed at the maintenance and preservation of the founda-

tions of life - that is the human spirit," said the Amir. His Highness Sheikh Sabah noted that Kuwait has always been developing and modernizing the methods of providing assistance.

"Kuwaiti charitable associations and peoples' fundraising committees have set an example in their continued support of many humanitarian projects in Asia and Africa, by individual initiatives that have become - by the blessing of Allah - a shining example of benevolence characterizing the Kuwaiti people," said His Highness the Amir. In 2008 Kuwait earmarked 10 percent of its total humanitarian assistance to countries affected by natural or man-made disasters to be channeled to UN organizations and specialized agencies active in the humanitarian field, His Highness the Amir told the ceremony.

Then, His Highness the Amir announced that Kuwait would double its annual contribution to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CEFR) to USD1 million. "I am pleased to announce before you of doubling our fixed annual voluntary contribution to the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to USD one million," His Highness Sheikh Sabah said. His Highness the Amir has always been keen on Kuwait's participation in the international humanitarian events, leading the Kuwaiti delegation to the first ever World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May, 2016.

## Humanitarian values

Addressing the summit, His Highness the Amir said: "Kuwait has long been acclaimed for its deep belief in humanitarian values and helping hand for the needy people." The total value of Kuwait's contributions to the relief effort in the last five years exceeded USD two billion, which made the country the world's biggest aid donor in terms of the ratio of aid to the country's GDP, His Highness the Amir added.

In the meantime, the annual Kuwait International Forum for Humanitarian Work was launched in 2014. The third forum was held last April. The event involves several government bodies and private organizations, besides Kuwaiti and foreign experts, working together to



**His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon pose for a photo after UN honors His Highness the Amir as a 'Humanitarian Leader' and Kuwait as a 'Humanitarian Center'. — KUNA**

promote humanitarian initiatives and activities. Part of Kuwait's major humanitarian role was hosting the First, Second and Third International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria Donors, January 2013, January 2014 and March 2015. During the three events, the country's total pledges in support of the Syrian people hit USD 1.3 billion. Leading the Kuwaiti delegation to the fourth conference held in London in February 2016, His Highness the Amir announced providing USD 300 million more over three years to support the Syrian refugees over.

## Charitable organizations

In addition to the official backing to the Syrian people, the Kuwaiti charity

organizations and societies launched many campaigns to collect aid for the Syrian people. The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) have played a leading role in these efforts. As for Iraq, Kuwait has always been keen on supporting the people there, especially the displaced, to alleviate the sufferings. In 2015, Kuwait announced a donation of USD 200 million to help displaced Iraqis. It also pledged USD 176 million during an Iraqi aid conference held in Washington last July. Ahead of the last fasting month of Ramadan, the Kuwaiti charity organizations distributed 12,000 food packages on displaced Iraqis in Iraq Kurdistan. On relief aid during times of natural disasters

and disease, Kuwait offered thousands and millions of dollars to several countries affected by the devastating forces of nature. The Palestinian cause has always been at the core of Kuwait's humanitarian work. The country has always been supporting the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. In 2009, Kuwait donated USD 34 million to contribute to the expenses of operations carried out by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

In 2013, USD 15 million were offered to UNRWA. Then in 2014, a relief aid campaign for the Gaza was launched in Kuwait, in the aftermath of the Israeli aggression on the Strip in July of that year. On Yemen, Kuwait announced in 2015 a generous donation of USD 100 million for the Yemeni people suffering from the ills of civil war.

## Natural disasters

The Kuwaiti humanitarian hand was also extended to those who suffered from natural disasters in Japan, the Philippines, Turkey, and Somalia in recent years. As for natural disasters aid, Kuwait offered a USD 10 million donation to Bangladesh which was struck by a tornado in November 2007. It also aided Japan with five million oil barrel (worth about USD 500 million) after the destructive earthquake and tsunami that struck the country in March 2011. In July 2012, Kuwait delivered humanitarian aid worth USD 10 million to Somalia to help people suffering from famine and drought in the Horn of Africa country.

In 2012, Kuwait donated USD 250,000 for victims of Turkey's earthquake. Kuwait provided USD 10 million for the Philippines, which was then suffering the aftermath of a devastating tornado in 2014, while also contributing USD 5 million to the World Health Organization (WHO) to fight the Ebola virus the same year. Kuwait's engagement in various philanthropic activities around the globe and the UN honoring of His Highness the Amir has brought wide praise from the world leading organizations and leaders who highly appreciated the unprecedented humanitarian role of the country. — KUNA

# KUWAIT URGED TO ABOLISH 'SPONSORSHIP SYSTEM'

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children, Maria Grazia Giammarinaro yesterday called on Kuwait to abolish the Kafala system (sponsorship system) but praised a number of measures taken by Kuwait to improve the situation of foreign workers especially domestic helpers. Giammarinaro said that some domestic workers have been forced into prostitution and that hundreds of them flee their employers every year for being forced to work for long hours, are mistreated and beaten.

"In order to be successful in the struggle against trafficking, the government of Kuwait should also consider to deal with the general context of migration and labor regulations that produce social vulnerabilities," she told a press conference at the conclusion of a five-

day visit at the invitation of the Kuwaiti government. "This is the reason why the Kafala system should be abolished and replaced by a different regulation, allowing migrant workers to enjoy substantial freedom in the labor market," Giammarinaro said. The UN official praised Kuwait for setting up two shelters for female domestic helpers who flee their employers and called for setting up a shelter for men. "This accomplishment is even more significant given that exploitation of domestic workers is prevalent in the region," she said.

"I encourage the government and institutions of Kuwait to continue in this direction and redouble efforts to better prevent trafficking and protect its victims," the UN official said. "It is necessary to address existing gaps especially regarding real alternatives to deportation when people are not willing to



**Minister of Justice, Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sanea hold talks with UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, Maria Grazia. — KUNA**

return," she said. Giammarinaro urged Kuwaiti authorities to drop the absconding charges against foreign workers and ensure paying their unpaid wages as well as the possibility of changing the employer without restriction.

She said that trafficking for sexual exploitation, particularly forced prostitution exists in Kuwait and the Gulf states and called for implementing the anti-trafficking in persons law in Kuwait to eradicate this phenomenon.

The UN official called on authorities to fast-track the establishment of a government owned recruitment agency to prevent trafficking in domestic workers. Giammarinaro called for the establishment of a "victim fund" that will provide a comprehensive compensation scheme for victims of trafficking. She also urged allowing migrant workers to enjoy the freedom to set up associations to protect their rights.