

Local

Arab Economic Summit's draft declaration warns of aggravating refugees' crises

Summit spotlights Arab potentials for serving citizens

BEIRUT: The draft declaration of the 4th Arab Economic and Social Development Summit in Beirut warned Arab countries from aggravating refugee crises. Beirut summit declaration, which Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) received, stressed the importance of joining all international donors and organizations to ease the suffering of all refugees. Arab leaders affirmed the significance of supporting the Palestinian people in their confrontation with the Israeli forces assuring their beliefs in their responsibility towards Jerusalem in order to preserve its Arab, Islamic and Christian identity. They also confirmed the importance of unifying all efforts by all concerned parties to provide the necessary funding to execute the plans in the developmental strategy of the occupied East Jerusalem 2018/2022.

The Arab Leaders showed importance of attracting more Arab and international investments to organize a secure immigration for the refugees. They have also spotlighted technology and its global effect on economy and the importance of keeping up with the rest of the world and to adopt new leading policies to create necessary skills to benefit from digital economy. The draft declaration announced the approval of the guiding charter to evolve small and medium businesses to guarantee Arab economic integration to create a competitive environment that will contribute to terminating unemployment. It also declared the approval of the Arab strategy for sustainable energy of 2030 to achieve sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions.

The Beirut summit declaration affirmed that investing in human is the fastest way to achieve the required economic growth, after approving the strategy of eliminating poverty with an aim to decrease poverty by 50 percent by 2030. The declaration indicated the agreement of Arab leaders on a regional initiative for women's health in the Arab region as a part of achieving sustainable development goals of 2030. The summit's declaration emphasized the importance of growing potentials and encouraging creativity in order to build a better and a more productive human that will contribute to building a society compatible with sustainable development.

Leaders also authorized a strategy to protect children seeking refuge in the region and stressed the importance of providing them with better lives away from fighting and terror. Arab Leaders have decided to hold the Arab Economic and Social Summit for the 5th time after four years in 2023 in Mauritania to follow-up the decision made in this year's declaration.

Summit discusses essential social, economic issues

BEIRUT: The Arab Development, Economic and Social Summit will discuss crucial matters today as Arab leaders gather to come up with positive political and economic outcomes benefiting Arab citizens. This fourth summit continues on the road paved by previous summits to fulfill Arab dreams and also will contribute to the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. On the economic sphere, Assistant Arab League Secretary for Economic Affairs Ambassador Kamal Ali said that one of the chief issues to be discussed during the summit was the Sudanese initiative to achieve Arab food security. Other paramount topics on the agenda will include food security emergency programs, Arab economic integration, improvement of Arab commercial exchange, and the development of agricultural and food products in the region, said the official. He added that updates on the grand Arab free-trade zone, digital economy, the Arab customs union, micro-Arab business ventures, small and medium Arab enterprises were also to be discussed by the summit.

Palestinian economy

Supporting Palestinian economy through UNRWA as well as other means in addition to the 2018-2020 strategy sectoral development plan for Jerusalem also one of the major topics of the event, said the Arab League official. He noted that the social and economic woes facing the Syrian refugees will be touched upon and hopefully new plans would be introduced to help the refugees. Meanwhile, Assistant Secretary-General, head of social affairs in the Arab League Haifa Abu Ghazaleh said that the summit would provide an important opportunity for the Arabic community to concentrate on the roots of social problems and current social standings. "The summit will debate a number of proposals that concern the social issues. It will focus on the importance of investing in the human resources to empower laborers to deal with the future as it affects economic growth directly by terminating poverty," Abu Ghazaleh added.

Abu Ghazaleh believed that the high profile attendance for this summit affirmed the significance of merging economic, social and environmental priorities to achieve sustainable development. "This summit is a journey that will reflect on many sectors in the Arab nation in the upcoming years," Abu Ghazaleh continued. Abu Ghazaleh also noted that this summit's agenda focuses on several cases that are worrying in many fields such as poverty, producing productive working hands and reinforcing social integration in different parts of the Arab world.

Lebanon's economic rise

The summit will focus on three main topics, the inter-mutual Arab market for electricity, land, aerial and maritime transportation as well as food security. Its business agenda includes 24 items, starting with a report by the Secretariat of the Arab League on Joint Arab economic, social and development works and a report on following up on last summit's decisions that, held in Riyadh in 2013. Significance of holding this summit in Beirut was a point of consensus among officials and Lebanese economic experts who thought it would reinforce Lebanon's place and its economy in the region, especially after dangerous phase the country went through.

Member of the parliamentary national economic, commerce and industry committee Elias Hankach said that holding the summit in Beirut would revive Lebanon's role among Arab nations, encourage return of foreign investments, restore faith in Lebanon's place among Arab countries in organizing such a major event and ensuring all security and logistic procedures. The summit is held in a delicate time where talks are spreading about rebuilding Syria, amid expectations Lebanon would have a major role at this level .. it would reflect directly on Lebanese traders, entrepreneurs and industrialists who are looking for markets to launch businesses," Hankach continued.

In the meantime, economic expert professor Jassem Ajaka said that the summit is a meeting among Arab leaders to distribute necessary resources for economic and social growth, and for Lebanon hosting such an event affirms its status regionally after the political and security events it has faced in the last five decades that have weakened its economy. Ajaka said Arab investments in Lebanon between 2006 and 2011 displayed opportunities provided by Lebanon, as an important international financial center, with a banking sector that could be equivalent to counterparts in the west. Ajaka also stressed on the importance of shedding the light on the economic feasibility of the CEDRE conference for international donors and investors to support Lebanon's economy that took place in Paris, France in 2018. It was attended by 40 countries that pledged to donate \$11 billion, a huge sum quite lucrative for aspiring entrepreneurs. — KUNA

Major event

The fourth Arab Development, Economic and Social Summit is a major event for discussing issues concerning Arab peoples, namely enhancing their living standards. Since its launch in Kuwait in 2009, Arabs' interest in the



Unifying efforts to fund East Jerusalem development

summit have increased, noticeably because it concerns the private sector, civil society, women, youth, education, food, water, energy security and development. Renovation and advancement in these sectors are a mutual interest for the Arabs, thus they ought to join hands for finding proper solutions to problems in these arenas.

Meetings among presidents and officials on sidelines of the summit contribute to activating plans to tackle mutual issues and reflect positively on political matters of common interest. The Lebanese aspire to see, during the summit, Arabs' collective will to cast aside thorny and divisive political issues and throw weight, anew, behind Lebanon after the freezing of Gulf countries' investments, widely considered a hard blow to the country's economy. Moreover, significance of this Arab Development, Economic and Social Summit lies in shedding light on economic capabilities of the participating Arab countries, which can attract huge investors from various countries worldwide.

Former Lebanese President Michel Suleiman says in a statement that value of this summit is discussing Arab development and social matters; away from complicated politics, focusing on development of Arab citizens' potentials and unifying the vision on handling current economic and development crises in the region. "Working on economic integration among Arab countries is one of the tasks of this summit through creating a productive center



DELHAMIEH, Lebanon: Refugees walk through flood water and mud covering the ground at an informal tent settlement housing Syrian refugees following winter storms in the area of Delhamiyeh, in the central Bekaa Valley on January 17, 2019. — AFP

point in each participating country for economy and development according to their strength spots," the ex-president Suleiman continues. "Lebanese authorities are counting on this summit to assure Lebanon's place among Arab nations, and to restore its trust amongst them after a tough phase," he added.

Delicate time

Meanwhile, Economy Minister Raed Khoury affirms the former president's opinion, saying that it is being held at a delicate time where conferees can hold extensive talks about finding solutions for ongoing common issues. Moreover, it is aspired to pave way for rebuilding the country and regional states. As for the economic expert, Ghazy Wazni, he says that the greatest benefit of this

summit is discussing ways of strengthening commercial ties, future economic relationships among Arab countries and evolving economic growth, excluding the oil sector.

Wazni considers this summit as a chance for two challenges: to enhance Arab economy to achieve the 2030's sustainable development goals and to rebuild Syria and Iraq. These two Arab countries have suffered widespread damage and destruction due to internal wars and infighting. Arab Development.

Economic and Social Summit was launched in 2009 in Kuwait for the first time, in line with a Kuwaiti-Egyptian initiative. During that summit, Arab leaders decided to hold the Economic Summit meetings regularly every two years. It was held in Kuwait 2009, Sharm El-Sheikh in 2011 and Riyadh in 2013. — KUNA

2009 Summit aspired to uplifting Arabs' living standards

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, along with former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, proposed the Arab Economic Summit as an event focusing on promotion of Arab states' economies. The first Arab Economic Summit began in Kuwait, January 2009. The initiative aimed to tackle issues of economic, developmental, social and cultural importance that affect life and dignity of Arab citizens and their right to lead a secure and decent life. On such basis, His Highness Sheikh the Amir Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah dedicated unique interest and support to ensure success of this summit and its organization. The call by His Highness to hold an Arab economic development summit reflected his deep vision and far-reaching insight regarding necessity of integration and development for the peoples of the Arab world, his Arab and national sense, as well as his concern that the Arab summits and conferences achieve the ambitions of the Arab peoples.

Taking into consideration importance of economic, social and development aspects with regard to comprehensive Arab security, this summit is a historic turning point in the Arab joint work and the real and right offset in implementing the Arab economic project, which was born fragile half a century ago. The summit's agenda includes issues relating to unemployment, preparing and qualifying Arab labor, methods of developing education, water and food security, in addition to discussing the issues of technology and methods of enhancing the coordination mechanism between the concerned Arab organizations to confront climate changes, natural disasters and emergencies.

Kuwait Declaration of the Arab Economic Summit indicates that it has been launched on basis of a new Arab economic development ideology, committing to what has been stated in the Arab League Charter, agreements and charters signed within the framework of the League and adopted strategies. The Declaration commended the Kuwaiti-Egyptian initiative, which underlined the relation between security and Arab social peace of the economic and social development, which was activated through issuing two resolutions in Riyadh and Damascus Arab Summits of 2007 and 2008 respectively, after a special summit to push the development cycle in the Arab world. It explained that the necessary resolutions were adopted to guarantee uplifting the living level of the Arab citizen, giving priority to joint Arab investments, and giving way to private sector and civil societies to participate in the advancing process of the economic and social development.

The declaration affirmed supporting infrastructure projects, developing sectors of production, business, services and social projects, preserving environment, in addition to projects of electricity link, Arab land link scheme and water and food security programs in order to realize Arab economic integration. Arab leaders commended the pioneer development initiative declared by His Highness the Amir on launching the Economic, Social and Development Summit. They also hailed Kuwait's contribution that was worth \$500 million to the budget of this initiative. In addition, it was decided to hold the Economic Summit meetings regularly every two years.

Due to the impact of the global financial crisis, the disturbance in the world financial market, the danger of recession and economic deflation and its negative repercussion on development, many countries, economic blocks and international financial organizations hurried to find proper solutions and limit the buildup of damage. Many leaders agreed to amplify their efforts to attain Arab economic and social integrity, as it is a main objective that all Arab countries are seeking to achieve the joint Arab economic and social action.

Regarding the global financial crisis, the declaration pointed out the leaders' agreement on following monetary and financial policies that enhancing Arab countries' potentials to face the backlash of the global financial crisis, so it asserted the importance of encouraging intra-Arab investment, providing suitable atmosphere, necessary protection, facilitating Arab capital movement among Arab Nations, widening the scope and mechanism of implementing the unified agreement of investing Arab capitals in the Arab countries. The Declaration reiterated importance of enhancing role of funds and joint Arab financial organizations, developing its resources, facilitating conditions of loans, mechanisms and accesses to finance basic infrastructure projects to allow participation in financing Arab economic integration projects, in cooperation with the private sector and providing credit facilities to various ventures.

Concerning the private sector, the Declaration emphasized providing the economic fundamentals and proper legislation environment by lifting obstacles that limit achieving economic and social development in Arab countries. The Declaration focused strongly on the action to elevate human potentials of the Arab citizen, and widening the scope of women and youth empowerment, increasing job opportunity before them, advancing health, education and

increasing real incomes. Furthermore, it focused on health services, the importance of increasing basic health care projects in Arab countries, activating the role of joint Arab health organizations to promote the health service level and providing it in a proper way to the Arab citizen and uplifting pharmaceutical production. As for women, The Declaration highlighted importance of woman empowerment, promoting her economic, social and legal conditions, enhancing her role in public life to achieve equality principle and assure justice and equity principles in the society.

In the field of agriculture and food security, the Declaration called for taking action to increase agricultural productivity, improving its rates, encouraging investment in agricultural development by accelerating the implementation of agricultural development strategy adopted in Riyadh Summit 2007. The Summit called also for taking all the necessary procedures to clear obstacles that are still hindering in the communication and information technology sector, and encouraging private companies and organizations to attract investment.

Demands of preserving the environment and natural resources, using those resources optimally to achieve sustainable development were one of the main aims of the Declaration. It also emphasized Arab cooperation in the energy field; particularly improving its effectiveness and rationalizing its usage as a mean of sustainable development, strengthening the existing Arab electrical link networks, enhancing natural gas networks and increasing the participation of the private sector in its investments. Demands made in the Declaration, regarding transportation, seeking to achieve linking land, marine and air transportation networks among Arab countries as they are the main veins of trade, tourism, investment and labor movement inside the Arab region. — KUNA

Egypt's top lawmaker arrives in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Speaker of the Egyptian House of Representatives Ali Abdel-Aal and his accompanying delegation arrived in Kuwait yesterday on a five-day official visit. The top Egyptian lawmaker was welcomed by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, head of the accompanying mission of honor MP Ali Al-Deqbas, Kuwaiti Ambassador in Cairo Mohammad Al-Thuwaikeh and Egyptian Ambassador in Kuwait Tareq Al-Qoni. — KUNA