

Local

Exclusive interview

# Sierra Leone Embassy marks 10 years in Kuwait; envoy woos investors, lauds ties

‘Come and feel at home - Sierra Leone is one of the most fascinating destinations’



KUWAIT: Sierra Leonean Ambassador to Kuwait Haja Ishata Thomas pictured during an interview at the Sierra Leone Embassy in Kuwait. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Chidi Emmanuel

**KUWAIT:** On July 1, 2019, the Embassy of Sierra Leone in Kuwait marked its 10-year anniversary. As part of efforts to promote tourism and investments, Sierra Leonean Ambassador to Kuwait Haja Ishata Thomas highlighted the key programs lined up to make Sierra Leone an investment magnet and one of the greatest economies in Africa. In an exclusive interview with Kuwait Times, the ambassador hailed Sierra Leone-Kuwait bilateral relations and urged Kuwaiti investors to turn to the African nation for fruitful investments. She said Sierra Leone has developed a political framework for the promotion and facilitation of inbound investments.

She urged Kuwaitis and foreigners to explore the vast Sierra Leonean market and investment opportunities. “Sierra Leone is beautiful and business-friendly. It has a lot of untapped resources,” Thomas said. She hinted the government is opening up some business venture in oil and gas, marine resource, transport, tourism and agricultural sector.

**Bilateral relations**

On Sierra Leone-Kuwait ties, Thomas said both nations have enjoyed cordial bilateral relations for decades. She lauded the effort of Kuwaiti leaders in maintaining peace and tranquility in this region.

“Kuwait and Sierra Leone belong to OIC and UN among other international organizations. During the invasion of Kuwait, Sierra Leone sent a contingent of nurses to support the state. We admire Kuwait’s democratic principles, its vibrant economy and rich cultural heritage. Meanwhile, the Sierra Leonean government has offered plots of land for Kuwait to open its embassy in a bid to cement our bilateral ties. Arrangements are in progress for the Foreign Minister of Sierra Leone to visit her counterpart in Kuwait. On the other hand, Sierra Leone has benefitted from the Kuwait Fund with lots of infrastructural projects,” she added, thanking His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his generosity and support.

“**Sierra Leone, Kuwait enjoyed cordial ties for decades**”

**Reforms, investments**

Turning to reforms, the envoy pointed out that the government has embarked on major reforms to promote economic cooperation in a bid to enhance economic growth and maintain regional peace, thus making Sierra Leone a magnet for investors. At a press briefing held at the embassy, Thomas underlined the investment opportunities in energy, education, mining and agricultural sectors.

She said local and foreign investors have been designed to encourage engagement in eligible new enterprises and expansion projects in mining, tourism, agro-industries, manufacture, construction, oil and gas



KUWAIT: Sierra Leonean ambassador to Kuwait Haja Ishata Thomas and First Secretary Khadijatu Eunice Bangura.

exploration. Thomas hinted the government is working on various attractive incentives to lure investors. She urged foreign investors to experience an ecofriendly and market-friendly environment. “Foreign investors are reaping bountifully from their investments in Sierra Leone,” she added.

**Tourism**

On tourism, the ambassador called on Kuwaitis and expatriates to take a trip to Sierra Leone and witness the lush vegetation, beautiful beaches and captivating

cultures on offer. “Come and feel at home. With its breathtaking mountains, palm-fringed exotic white sandy beaches, tropical rainforests and vibrant culture, Sierra Leone is one of West Africa’s most fascinating destinations,” she said.

The ambassador in her goodwill message reaffirmed the embassy’s commitment to Kuwait’s media, urging it to help in promoting the image of Sierra Leone and not darkening it. She urged all to perceive the African nation in a new light and put aside all stereotypes, misinformation, prejudices and wrong assertions.

In my view

## Al-Awadhi’s legacy lives on

By Dr Khaled Al-Saleh

We recently lost Dr Abdul Rahman Al-Awadhi, may Allah have mercy on his soul. I have known Awadhi since 1994, when he quit all government posts and dedicated all his time to voluntary and charity work. It has been 25 years since this acquaintance started, and this makes me mention the following:

Awadhi had taken modesty after his father. He always had a smile on his face, loved charity and reading and there was always a book on his desk. He was very sharp and creative. He always came up with solutions to problems we deemed unsolvable. He founded many humane and medical initiatives for the best of his nation. He was a fierce advocate of Arabic and true Islamic values.

There are many stories about him, including one about a Muslim American scientist who visited Kuwait 10 years ago to communicate with some officials. After concluding the tour, someone asked the visitor about the most significant thing he saw here. “It is Abdul Rahman Al-Awadhi,” said the scientist - who had never visited Kuwait before - without any hesitation.

A colleague who had visited an African country on an official mission during Awadhi’s tenure as health minister told me that on concluding the visit and on writing the usual report about the mission, he forgot the names of two types of medicines used in that country, and on asking one of his companions, he advised him to make up two imaginary names, saying that nobody ever reads these reports. “After returning to Kuwait, we visited the minister, who thanked us for our humanitarian efforts. However, before leaving his office, Awadhi asked us about the two fake names we used in the report,” my friend said, noting that Awadhi had read the entire report.

The best things Awadhi left for us are edifices that reflect his creativity and love for this nation, including the Arabization Center, Islamic Organization for Health Sciences, the regional Environment Protection Organization and many other societies, reflecting his complete dedication and devotion. He was also keen on prayers and voluntary fasting. You will surely be missed by many people.

## Kuwait Airways beefs up Airbus A320 fleet

**ISTANBUL:** Kuwait Airways is set to receive next month between five to six Airbus A320 aircrafts as part of the airline’s plan to provide quality services to its clientele. The national carrier will own a total of 28 Airbus A320 by next year, its Chairman Yousef Al-Jassem said as he toured Istanbul’s new airport, where he held talks with officials from IGA: the consortium building and operating the sprawling facility. On his visit to Istanbul, he said it was a step towards stronger aviation ties between Kuwait and Turkey, ahead of a planned “partnership deal” Kuwait’s flag carrier seeks to clinch with IGA. The agreement primarily entails airport services, the official divulged, describing Turkey as a hotspot that has long beguiled Kuwaiti travelers, a fact he attributed to the commonalities

both nations share.

The Kuwaiti official’s visit is crucial to push aviation ties, according to IGA’s Chairman Murat Sumutcu, who pointed out that it was in the best interest of both countries. He added that the Kuwaiti delegation got a firsthand look at the cutting-edge technology employed by the new mega airport, which has already begun serving 16 million people. Kuwait’s Consul General in Istanbul Mohammad Al-Mohammad emphasized the importance of closer aviation ties as well, given the fact that the number of Kuwaitis to have visited Turkey has increased exponentially. Kuwait’s national carrier is offering daily flights to Turkey all summer long as part of a newly revamped itinerary.

Meanwhile, Turkish Airlines announced yesterday that it inked a code sharing agreement with Kuwait Airways. The Turkish Airlines said in a press release yesterday that the agreement would be applicable for joint flights from Kuwait International Airport and the airports of Istanbul and Sabiha Gokcen. The accord was signed at the Turkish Airlines headquarters in Istanbul. The inking ceremony was attended by Director General of the Turkish Airlines Bilal Eksi and Kuwait Airways Chairman Jassem. It will allow the two sides to reach new destinations via each other’s networks. — KUNA



ROME: The Kuwaiti military pilots during the graduation ceremony. — KUNA

## Kuwaiti pilots graduate, train on Eurofighters

**ROME:** Seven Kuwaiti military pilots have graduated from Italy receiving courses that included training on one of the world’s most formidable combat aircraft, the Eurofighter Typhoon. The airmen have completed the courses at the International Flying School and graduated at a ceremony held at the southern air base of Galatina. Eurofighter joint international bureau said in a statement yesterday that the graduation ceremony, held last Friday, was attended by Commander of the Kuwaiti Air Force Air Vice Marshal

Adnan Al-Fadhli. Speaking during the ceremony, Air Vice Marshal Al-Fadhli said the occasion depicted depth of the Kuwaiti-Italian relations and fruitful cooperation between the two countries in various sectors. This significant event also signals distinctive cooperation between Kuwait and Italy for enhancing capacities of the Kuwaiti Army including the Air Force, he said.

Kuwaiti officers who take part in military courses in Italy get acquainted with latest technology that enable them to train on the Eurofighters, he said, also indicating that the airmen get training on commanding Eurofighter Typhoon squadrons. The Kuwaiti Air Force chief announced last year, during visits to plants in Europe where the fighter jet is manufactured, that the Gulf country would receive the first batch of Eurofighters by September 2020. Eurofighter Typhoon is the world’s most advanced swing-role combat aircraft providing simultaneously deployable Air-to-Air and Air-to-Surface capabilities. — KUNA



ISTANBUL: Kuwait Airways Chairman Yousef Al-Jassem (center) holds talks with officials from IGA. — KUNA

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