



The closing session of the Economic and Social Summit

KUWAIT, Jan 20 (KUNA) -- The Arab Economic Summit`s "Kuwait Declaration" underscored Tuesday the importance of elevating the standard of living for Arab citizens, granting priority to joint Arab investments, and allowing for greater participation of the private sector and civil societies in economic and social development.

The declaration, entitled "Elevating the Standard of Living for Arab Citizens" and announced at the summit`s closing session by Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa, gave priority to joint Arab investments, granting more opportunity for the participation of the private sector and civil societies in social and economic growth and in supporting infrastructure projects, developing the production, commerce and service sectors, as well as social projects, environmental protection, electricity and railway linkage, water and food security, all with the aim of achieving Arab economic integration.

The leaders lauded the initiative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for establishing a USD two billion fund for supporting investment projects and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and its contribution of USD 500 million to this initiative.

It said that social development, in all its elements and especially in education, was a main factor in achieving comprehensive development goals.

Despite the achievements made by many Arab in human development, especially in education, health services, combating poverty and illiteracy, the implementation of the greater Arab free trade zone, regional Arab economic blocs and progress in cooperation between these blocs and international ones, it said the Arab world was still facing local and international challenges that affected its security, sovereignty and social status.

These challenges, at the local level, were poverty, unemployment, low living standards, low trade levels and inter-Arab investments, it noted, as well as the migration of capital and qualified workforce, weak infrastructure, inadequate education levels and incompatibility with labor market requirements, food and water security, climate change, energy, and inefficient use of resources.

As for international challenges, the declaration said the global economic crisis and unrest in international financial markets, threat of recession and economic crunch and the impact this could have on Arab development had all prompted economic blocs and financial institutions around the world to find suitable means to tackle these issues and prevent their growth, and this included Arab efforts.

As for Arab economic and social integration, the declaration agreed on the need to double efforts to achieve comprehensive economic and social integration among Arab states and to steer clear of any political aspects and to make it a means to achieve sustainable social and economic development and achieving the aspirations of the people for integration in global economy and dealing with international political and economic blocs.

On the global economic crisis, the declaration called for following monetary and financial policies that boost the capability of Arab states to face the global meltdown and actively participate in international efforts to guarantee the world`s financial stability, as well as activating the role of Arab financial institutions to increase inter-Arab investments and support Arab economy.

As for investment, the declaration called for encouraging inter-Arab investments, as well as providing a suitable environment and protection for these investments, facilitating the movement of Arab capital, and expanding the scope of the agreement for the investment of Arab capital in Arab states.

In terms of finance and financial institutions, the declaration called for boosting the role of joint Arab and national funds and financial institutions, developing their resources, relaxing conditions for granting loans, developing mechanisms for financing main inter-Arab projects in order to contribute to Arab economic integration, involving the private sector, providing credit facilitations for small and medium enterprises.

On statistics, it called for making data and accurate statistics available, saying that these were vital to planning and policy making, as well as decision making in economic and social development. It also called for developing and boosting the capabilities and resources of statistical bodies.

Meanwhile for the private sector, the declaration called for providing the economic and legal frameworks for the operation of the private sector and removing all obstacles facing its active participation in social and economic development in Arab states. It also called for boosting its role in building Arab social and economic integration, facilitating the movement of individuals, especially businessmen, and removing all obstacles in the way of transfer of capital among the Arab states.

Moreover, the declaration spoke of human resource development called for working to increase the efficiency of Arab human resources within efforts to achieve the Millennium Goals by 2015, curbing poverty, expanding the empowerment of women and youth, creating job opportunities, improving the health and education sectors, and raising incomes.

On education and scientific research, the declaration called for developing education and learning systems to keep up with the fast-paced developments in science and technology, elevating the standards of educational institutions and making them more efficient, and supporting the educational and scientific research plan approved in the Khartoum and Damascus summits (2006 and 2008 respectively).

It also urged placing greater emphasis on scientific research and allocating budgets for it, easing access to knowledge, consolidating relations between Arab research centers, nationalizing modern technologies, encouraging scientists and researcher and encouraging their work.

As for health care, the declaration called for expanding basic health care projects in the Arab world, activating the role of joint Arab health institutions in order to raise service standards. It also called for according special attention to tackling non-contagious diseases such as diabetes, and producing effective medicine, easing its registration and thus creating medicament security in the Arab world.

The Arab leaders, in the resolutions issued by the Arab Economic Summit "In Solidarity with Gaza," underscored Tuesday the importance of reconstruction efforts in Gaza Strip through a rehabilitation and construction program in coordination with the Palestinian Authority.

The resolutions were announced at the summit's closing session by Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa.

They called for continuing to present humanitarian assistance to Gazans, providing financial and technical support for the rehabilitation of infrastructure, health services, and improving living standards of Palestinians in the Strip.

Moreover, they called for quickly completing the Arab electrical linkage project and removing all obstacles facing the project in action.

As for the railway linkage system, they called for launching the project in line with the plan placed by the Council of Arab Transport Ministers and for member states to take steps to adapt their national legislations to remove all obstacles facing the completion of the project.

They also urged Arab financial institutions to carry out more active role in increasing funding and investments in the Arab countries with special emphasis on integration projects.

The Arab leaders, in their resolutions, vowed continued support for the national financial institutions to contribute to stability of the global financial situation, and emphasized importance of stability of oil prices for best interest of oil producers and consumers.

Another resolution called for adopting necessary measures to establish the custom union as of 2010 to be fully operational by 2015 to ultimately establish the Common Arab Market.

The leaders praised efforts of the private sector in supporting joint Arab action and invited it to continue contributing to Arab economic development.

They also called for activating the role of civil societies in the economic, social, and development fields and boosting partnership with Arab organizations and corporations to achieve the development, social, and economic goals.

Furthermore, the Arab leaders called for launching an emergency Arab food security program.

On water security, they tasked the Council of Arab Water Ministers with preparing a strategy for water security in the Arab region to face challenges and requirements for sustainable development.

In their resolutions, the leaders called for executing the comprehensive program for cutting unemployment rates in Arab states through the Arab Labor Organization and related bodies in the member states.

They designated 2010-2020 as the "Arab decade for employment and reducing poverty by half," and giving priority to developmental policies in the Arab states in order to boost employment rates and create jobs, curb unemployment, and improve living standards.

As for poverty, they called for implementing the Arab program for combating poverty and financing its programs for four years, while inviting Arab finance institutions to contribute to financing them.

On education, Arab leaders called for the execution of a plan to develop education in the Arab world between 2009 and 2019.

As for health, the leaders called on Arab governments to improve health care services, implement family care systems, and including this on the agenda of Arab health ministries