



KINGDOM OF BELGIUM

Statement by

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**Debate on the Gulf Region:
"Maintenance of international peace and security:
Comprehensive review of the situation in the Persian
Gulf."**

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Mr President,

Let me start by thanking you for organising this debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary General for his inspiring speech.

This debate is indeed much needed, Mr President, as tensions are growing in the Gulf. It is the responsibility of this Council to address the issue with a view to preventing any escalation and conflict, which would be tragic both for the region and for international peace and security. We must also aim to create lasting stability by contributing to the construction of a regional security architecture.

Mr President,

Belgium is a founding member of the European Union and the OSCE, and as such encourages any regional approach to dialogue, cooperation and, ultimately, integration and the defence of common interests and values. This is not a new idea for the wider Gulf and Middle East region, but now is the time to put it into practice.

I believe that three guidelines are important for this.

Firstly, the countries in the region suffer from a cruel lack of mutual trust. This thwarts any joint initiative to build a common future. Confidence is not something that is decreed at a major conference; it is built, step by step, with very concrete actions, which although modest at the start have the potential to create a virtuous circle. The first focus of any initiative should therefore be the development of **concrete confidence-building measures** between countries that want to move forward. I am talking about concrete steps in very limited areas, where the abstract notion of common interests could be translated into tangible benefits for all. These could include, for example, projects in water management, environmental conservation, energy transition and economic diversification, and joint initiatives in the fields of health, high-quality tourism and cultural heritage preservation.

Secondly, regional ownership of these initiatives is a key element. There is no point in trying to impose turnkey models, even if they have the best of intentions. This

does not mean that countries outside the region have no role to play, quite the contrary. They can support confidence-building measures in a very concrete way and share their experiences. Indeed, Belgium believes that the EU, and certainly other actors, have historical experience of regional integration and cooperation that can be a source of inspiration. The OSCE, too, in the wake of the Helsinki Process, which the SG has mentioned several times, has built up a remarkable inventory of confidence- and security-building measures. Let's use these rich sources of learning.

Thirdly, the **United Nations** has a supporting role to play in this project, as the Secretary-General has just stressed. Through its institutional resources and the shared values of the Charter, the United Nations can support preventive diplomacy efforts and thus help to bridge national divides.

Another point that cannot be avoided, Mr President, is the *over-armament of the region*. Ultimately, **disarmament and non-proliferation**, both in the conventional and non-conventional fields, must become a common goal.

In this respect, Belgium supports the *Iranian nuclear agreement*. My country joins its European partners and the majority of the members of this Council in defending the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with conviction. It is one of the great successes of nuclear non-proliferation, dialogue and diplomacy. Since its entry into force, this plan has ensured the exclusively peaceful nature of the Iranian programme. That is also why Belgium regrets, on the one hand, the withdrawal of the United States from the Plan of Action and the reimposition of unilateral sanctions and, on the other hand, Iran's growing failure to comply with its commitments. We reject any "less for less" approach.

Still on the subject of security, my country believes that putting an end to the **conflict in Yemen**, an important point also mentioned by the SG, could represent a building block in the gradual establishment of this future regional structure for dialogue and cooperation. We therefore call for real political commitment by all parties to a Joint Declaration that will pave the way for peace and greater cooperation and mutual trust in the region.

In conclusion, Mr President, I would like to mention two principles that should guide our action, namely **dialogue and cooperation**. Only through dialogue and cooperation can a common political vision be developed. These are certainly not easy principles, but they are indispensable for moving forward.

Thank you for your attention.