

ECSSR 20th Annual Conference The Middle East: Shifting Roles, Interests and Alliances

March 31–April 1, 2015



In the name of God, the Most Passionate, the Most Merciful

I am pleased to welcome you to this press conference announcing the 20th Annual Conference of the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR), to be held this year under the title The Middle East: Shifting Roles, Interests and Alliances, under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces and President of the ECSSR on March 31–April 1, 2015 at the ECSSR office complex in Abu Dhabi.

This Conference is of great importance owing to its vital theme revolving around the transformation of roles, interests and alliances in the Middle East—a region that has witnessed numerous turbulent developments as part of the so-called “Arab Spring” and the many risks and challenges this has posed to the stability of its constituent countries.

The importance of the Conference also stems from the fact that it brings together leading experts on local, regional and international issues, as well as a number of elites from the UAE and beyond, including officials, academics, strategists, media experts and diplomats.

The keynote address will be delivered by H.E. Fouad Siniora, former Prime Minister of the Lebanese Republic, whilst the Welcoming and Concluding Remarks will be delivered by H.E. Dr. Jamal Sanad Al-Suwaidi, Director General of the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research.

Among the most prominent participants will be Dr. Paul Salem, Vice-President of the Middle East Institute, USA; Prof. Mohamed Haddad, UNESCO Chair of Comparative Studies of Religions and President of the Arab Observatory for Religions and Freedoms, Tunisian Republic; Dr. Pan Guang, Vice-Chairman and Director of the Shanghai Center for International Studies, People's Republic of China; Dr. Abdulreda Assiri, Dean of the College of Social Sciences at Kuwait University; Dr. Marwan Muasher, Vice-President for Studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Dr. Mohammed bin Huwaidan, Associate Professor of International Relations and Head of the Political Science Department at UAE University; Dr. Amr El-Shobaki, an expert at the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies and a former member of the Egyptian Parliament; Dr. Ahmed Youssef Ahmed, Professor of Political Science at Cairo University; and Dr. Abdullah Al-Shayji, former Chairman of the Political Science Department and Professor of Political Science at Kuwait University, and visiting professor at George Washington University.

The Program of the Conference includes five specialized panels. The first will discuss the current political and strategic situation in the Middle East, and will focus on the changing interests and alliances between the 'Arab change' countries and regional powers, the current situation in those countries, and related opportunities and challenges for the international coalition against terrorism.

The second session will review security threats in the Middle East and shifts in the thought and practice of terrorist organizations, and will discuss the issue of sectarian and religious polarization in the region.

The third session will address regional and international balances in the Middle East, examining relations and international alliances and their impact on the region, the role of energy issues in the strategies of regional and international powers, China's role in the region, and the balance of power in the Middle East.

The fourth session will discuss the future of the Arab political scene, chart the prospects for stability in the 'Arab change' countries, examine the role of pan-Arab institutions and their future, and explore the prospects for inter-Arab relations.

The fifth and final session will discuss the subject of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and its role in ongoing regional and international shifts.

The ECSSR looks forward to your important and active role in the proceedings as representatives of the media, covering the conference in a manner that maximizes the benefits of the concepts and subjects presented.

Thank you for your attendance; and may the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you.