

Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC)

Definition:

GCC is a political, economic, social, regional organization according to its charter. It is a regional cooperation system between the Arab States of the Gulf created to meet the challenges imposed by surrounding circumstances.

The scope of its work includes economy, politics, security, culture, health, information, education, legal affairs, administration, energy, industry, mining, agriculture, fishery and livestock.

Member States:

The United Arab Emirates
The Kingdom of Bahrain
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
The Sultanate of Oman
The State of Qatar
The State of Kuwait

Geographical location of GCC:

GCC states are located in the Arabian peninsula southwest of Asia between the latitudes of 15 and 35 north of equator and longitudes of 35 and 60 east of Greenwich, bordered by Iraq and Jordan in the North, Republic of Yemen and the Arabian Sea in the South, Arabian Gulf in the East, and Red Sea in the West.

Population:

According to 2000 census, the total population of the six member states is 31,015,200.

Area:

The total area of GCC countries is estimated to be 2,667,000 square kilometres.

The establishment of the GCC:

The geographical nature of the GCC states and the similarity of their regulations, economic and social conditions, and the nature of contemporary challenges are the factors that helped in the establishment of the GCC.

The Foreign Ministers of the six member states met in Riyadh on February 4, 1981 and issued a communique expressing their agreement to establish a Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, form a Secretariat General for this purpose, hold periodic summit meetings and ministerial meetings to achieve the objectives set out for the member states and their people.

The first summit was held on May 25, 1981 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. Summits are held every year.

Objectives of the GCC:

The basic objectives of the Cooperation Council are as follows:

- (1) To effect coordination, integration, and interconnection among member states in all fields in order to achieve unity among them.
- (2) To deepen and strengthen relations, links and areas of cooperation now prevailing among their people in various fields.
- (3) To formulate similar regulations in various fields including the following:
 - (a) Economic and financial affairs.
 - (b) Commerce, customs and communications
 - (c) Education and Culture
 - (d) Social and health affairs
 - (e) Information and tourism
 - (f) Legislative and administrative affairs
- (4) To stimulate scientific and technological progress in the fields of industry, mining, agriculture, water and animal resources, to establish scientific research, to establish joint ventures and encourage cooperation by the private sector for the good of their people.

Organizations of the Cooperation Council:

The Cooperation Council has the following main organizations:

- (1)The Supreme Council to which is attached the Commission for Settlement of Dispute.
- (2)The Ministerial Council.
- (3)The Secretariat General.

(1) Supreme Council:

The Supreme Council is the highest authority of the Cooperation Council formed of heads of member states. Its presidency is rotatory based on the alphabetical order of the names of the member states.

It holds two ordinary and consultative sessions every year. Extraordinary sessions may be convened at the request of any member seconded by another member.

It holds its session in the territories of member states.

Supreme Council's meeting is considered valid if attended by two-thirds of the member states.

The Cooperation Council has a commission called "The Commission for the Settlement of Dispute" which is attached to the Supreme Council.

The Supreme Council establishes the composition of the Commission for every case on an "ad-hoc" basis in accordance with the nature of dispute.

If a dispute arises over interpretation or implementation of the Charter and such a dispute is not resolved within the Ministerial Council or the Supreme Council, the Supreme Council may refer such dispute to the Commission for the Settlement of Dispute.

The Commission submits its recommendation or opinions as applicable, to the Supreme Council for such action as the Supreme Council deems appropriate.

(2) Ministerial Council

The Ministerial Council is formed of the Foreign Ministers of the Member States or other delegated ministers. The presidency of the Ministerial Council is for the Member States which presided the last ordinary session of the supreme Council or if necessary, or the states which is next to preside the Supreme Council.

The Ministerial Council meets every three months. An extraordinary meeting could also be held whenever needed.

(3) The Consultative Commission for the GCC Supreme Council:

Based on the resolution of the GCC Supreme Council in its 8th session held in Kuwait in December 1997, to establish an advisory commission for the Supreme Council consisting of 30 members (five from each GCC Member State for three renewable years), the Commission held its first meeting in November, 1998.

(4) Secretariat General:

The Secretariat General is composed of a Secretary-General, Assistant Secretaries-General, and a number of staff as required. Its headquarters is in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The Secretariat General consists of the following sectors:

- Secretary-General's Office
- Political Affairs.
- Military Affairs
- Economic Affairs
- Human and Environment Affairs
- Legal Affairs
- Finance and Administration Affairs
- Information Centre
- Information Department
- The Technical Telecommunication Bureau in Bahrain
- GCC Delegation in Brussels