GCC needs partners, not cheerleaders



Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

Some of those who attack the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) resemble a man standing outside his neighbors' house with a pickaxe, insisting that he has come to inspect the building's safety. When GCC member states agree, they accuse the Council of forming a bloc. When they disagree, they declare it dead. When it acts, they question its motives; when it remains silent, they interpret its silence as an admission of guilt. One might think they expect the Council to convene a final meeting, thank its critics and then join them in dissolving itself!

Not all criticism is an attack. People have every right to ask questions, make demands and hold institutions accountable. But some approach the task of reform armed with demolition tools, then become indignant when asked where the maintenance fund is. More remarkably, the same voices lament Arab disunity in the morning but take offence at Gulf cooperation in the evening. They celebrate unity as a poetic ideal, only to search for flaws in its rhythm and rhyme when it becomes a reality.

Yet responding to such campaigns with a statement or speech is no longer enough. By the time an official response is issued, a rumor may already have spread, gained traction and moved on to a new platform. Truth needs to be communicated effectively and promptly; otherwise, those seeking to distort it will reach the public first. This is an increasingly serious challenge amid populist rhetoric and attempts by certain voices within our own societies to undermine confidence in the Council.

We therefore appeal to the dynamic GCC Secretary-General to bring renewed energy to the Council's communication and response mechanisms. The media battle does not wait for official documents to be completed, nor does it give the truth extra time to have its punctuation reviewed. What is needed is early monitoring, a rapid response, clear arguments and public-facing communication that understands when to explain, when to refute and when to allow an allegation to collapse under the weight of its own contradictions.

However, the Council's strength cannot rest on communication alone. It must also be firmly rooted in society. Civil society is one of the pillars of that strength: a house stands more securely when its inhabitants help reinforce its foundations and recognize that its roof protects them all. Civil society organizations, professional associations and volunteer groups can give Gulf cooperation a meaningful, everyday presence in people's lives. A doctor collaborating with colleagues across the Gulf, a volunteer taking part in a joint initiative and a young person finding opportunities to work alongside peers from neighboring countries all help build relationships that campaigns of suspicion cannot easily dismantle.

We hope Their Majesties and Highnesses, the leaders of the GCC member states, may Allah protect them, will direct their support towards the Secretary-General in strengthening civil society engagement within the Council's framework. This should include clear avenues for cooperation with non-governmental organizations and support for Gulf-wide networks in health, education, culture, environmental protection and volunteer work.

Greater space should be created for youth and women, alongside joint programs with clearly defined objectives and channels through which community proposals can be heard, assessed and followed up. Engagement must be practical, continuous and measurable rather than symbolic. We do not want this partnership to amount to an annual event, a seat at the back of a conference hall or a commemorative photograph after which participants leave with certificates of appreciation but little understanding of what they have achieved. Civil society has experience, initiative and the ability to reach people directly. It deserves to be recognized as a genuine partner in advancing the aspirations of our leaders and safeguarding the future of the Gulf.

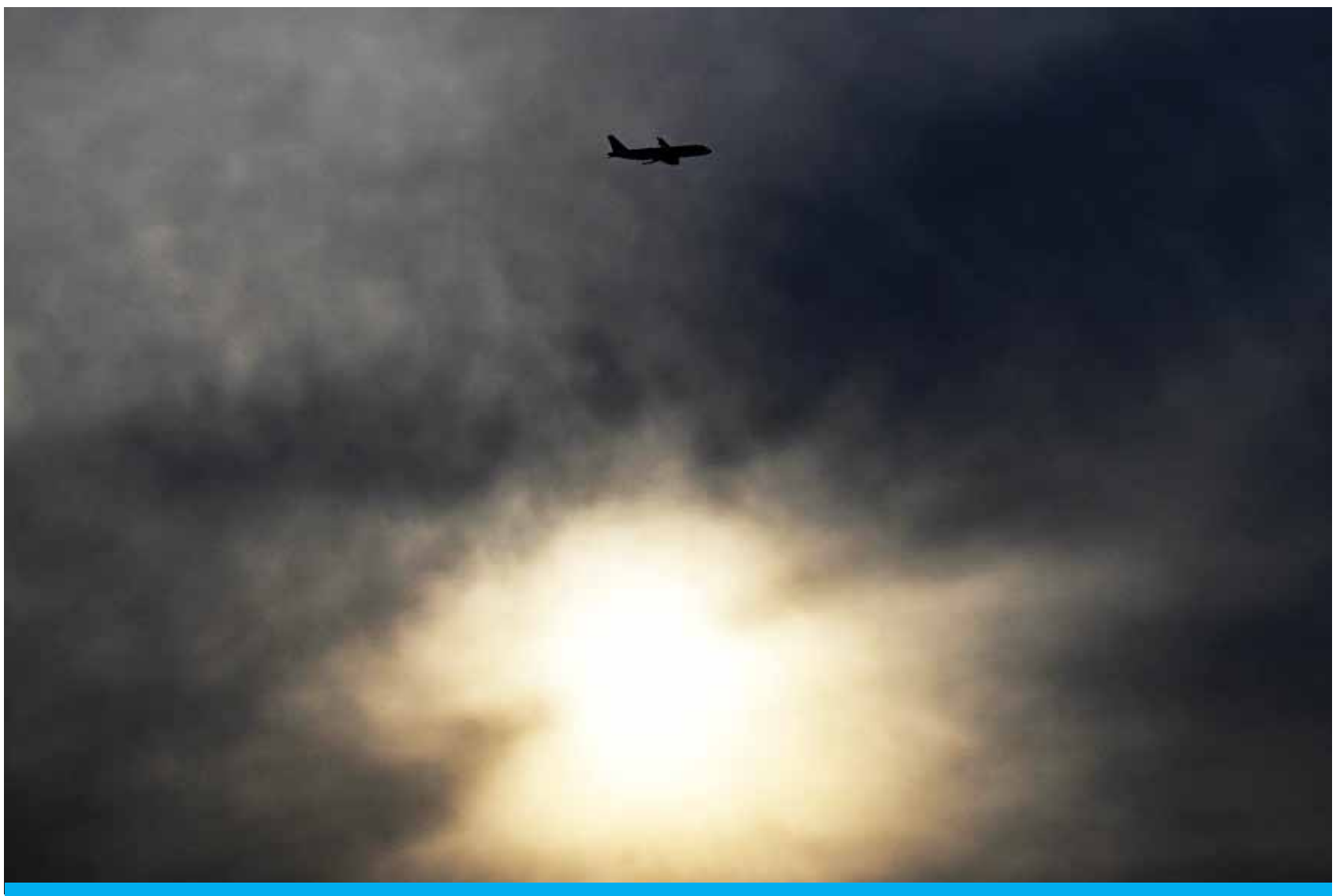
Its representatives should have regular opportunities to engage in dialogue with the GCC General Secretariat and contribute constructively to explaining and defending the Council's role. Such participation would allow civil society to become an active force in strengthening public understanding of Gulf cooperation and its importance to future generations. Today, there is an opportunity to reinforce the Council through the participation of volunteers and community organizations, just as we support its government institutions. This opportunity is particularly urgent in light of efforts by certain groups to cast doubt on the Council and, in some cases, call for measures that would undermine it further.

The most effective response will come when people stand alongside their governments in protecting and strengthening Gulf cooperation. That partnership is the real bulwark. When citizens feel they have a meaningful role in the Gulf family, they become more committed to protecting it and better equipped to defend it with knowledge and confidence. Those who have worked together on a common project understand the value of what they have built, making it far more difficult to persuade them that tearing it down serves the public interest.

The GCC does not need an army of cheerleaders. It needs partners who ask questions, offer suggestions and take practical action. Applause ends when a ceremony is over; partnership begins the following morning, when everyone returns to their responsibilities. Your Excellency the Secretary-General, I recognize your dedication and sincerity and am confident that you are working within the scope of your authority to advance the Council's work and strengthen its foundations. I hope that closer engagement with civil society will become one of the practical avenues for public participation, allowing communities to make a tangible contribution within the GCC framework.

Every bond forged between people adds another support to this shared house, and every joint initiative strengthens its defenses against those wielding destructive tools. As for those who argue that weakening the Council is the way to reform it, perhaps they should test that theory on their own umbrellas first — before inviting the rest of us to stand with them in the rain.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A plane operated by Kuwaiti airline Jazeera Airways flies past the clouds as the sun sets over Kuwait on October 11, 2026. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KIPCO launches fourth edition of its flagship career readiness program

30 graduates selected for the nine-week program

KUWAIT: Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) – KIPCO – has launched the fourth edition of its career readiness program, ENBAT, bringing together 30 recent university graduates to develop the practical skills needed to transition successfully into the workplace. Hosted by the American University of Kuwait, the program attracted 350 applicants, with 30 participants selected following a multi-stage interview process. The selected graduates bring diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives, creating an environment that encourages collaboration and reflects the dynamics of today's workplace.



Commenting on the launch, KIPCO's Group Senior Vice President – Corporate Communications and Investor Relations, Eman Al Awadhi, said: "ENBAT reflects KIPCO's commitment to investing in young people and equipping them with the skills and confidence to embark on their professional journeys. This fourth edition reinforces the importance of programs that bridge the gap between academic learning and workplace expectations. As the professional landscape continues to evolve, so does ENBAT. This year, we have introduced a new focus on the ethical and responsible use of artificial intelligence in the workplace, alongside practical workshops designed to prepare participants for the opportunities and challenges ahead."

Developed in collaboration with en.v, a non-profit organization specializing in programs that promote collaboration and communication across different segments of society, ENBAT consists of nine weekly training sessions. The program focuses on four core areas: critical thinking, effective communication, design thinking and workplace culture and skills application. Through interactive workshops and group activities, participants strengthen their problem-solving, adaptability, teamwork and leadership skills. Seven trainers, prepared by en.v and drawing on private sector experience across fields including operations management, academic research, digital marketing, architecture, investment, data science and development consultancy, will deliver the sessions.

Curiosity never needed an audience

By Dana Roy

There is a difference between being interested in something and wanting people to know you're interested in it. You can see it in the sudden rush to Homer after a movie made The Odyssey fashionable again.

A few years ago, students were languidly skimming through those same verses, grumpy and impatient for the bell to ring. Then came a movie, and all of a sudden Greek Mythology is the Internet's latest fascination. Penelope's loom became a dinner-party cliché, even if no one knew what she was weaving against.

I am not being sarcastic when I say this. Trends are not inherently shallow. I believe that there is a difference between being attracted to something and being attracted to being seen near it, though. One is curiosity and the other is pure performance.

Consider Dostoevsky. Along the way, quoting him came to symbolize depth. A declaration that you, too, have looked into the abyss. Many of the quotes being passed around on social media are de-contextualized, misquoted, or even fabricated. Crime and Punishment boiled down to one heart-wrenching line on a smartphone screen, divorced from 400 pages of agony that gives the quote its true value.

This is the same when it comes to paintings. Wanderer above the Sea of Fogand and The Death of Marat continuously reemerge every couple of months, repurposed as an aesthetic on a Pinterest board or a TikTok repost captioned "mood". No one cares why the artist painted it, what century pressed against its frame, or what argument the brushstrokes had with their time. The image survives, yet the past remains behind, completely untouched.

This is what I believe to be the essence of performative intellectualism: Knowledge as inventory, not relationship. It doesn't matter if you understand as long as there's something to display. You simply have to show it to the world before it goes out of fashion. Just as how people buy books and never break their spines, strategically displaying them in hopes that someone will snap a photo to submit to some invisible jury.

This has further been compounded by the use of social media. Once a private ideal, today a reading list has become a public show, posted, photographed, evidenced before opening the first page. The image takes the place of reading. No one silently verifies whether or not the sentence after the caption actually follows it.

True curiosity is different. It's quieter. It does not want a crowd's approval to care about something. It will spend a random afternoon on a subject that may never trend: how tide pools work, the etymology of a forgotten word, why a certain fugue resolves the way it does, without any audience, any reward but the private click of understanding. Being the only one in the room who finds something interesting is comfortable.



There is also an element of modesty in genuine curiosity that is not possible in performance. The performer should appear to already know, at all times. The curious person will ask a question that should be obvious; he or she will say, "I don't really understand this," and may feel bad for a few seconds because of it. This risk is where genuine learning takes place. Certainty forecloses it.

Don't get me wrong, I don't mind when people find Homer in the film or Dostoevsky in a screenshot. Entry points are entry points. In other words, one has to go to a depth through some surface point. What bothers me is when the surface is the end goal, when the reference is the outcome, and no one goes further once the algorithm has hit its next craze.

Real thinking is slow; it doesn't show itself to many people and often no one rewards it for showing. It's a person up late asking a question that does not interest anyone else, except for themselves. That person may never talk about what they discover. They may never seem like the smartest person in a room. Years later, however, when everyone has gone from Homer to something else, they will be among few ones who truly understand what they have read, long after the end applause has faded.

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