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## German Near and Middle East Gala Event 2008

by Helene Rang

On 28 May 2008, 300 guests passed through the gates of the Kronprinzenpalais for the NUMOV German Near and Middle East

The tables were soon abuzz with lively conversation, which only seized for the speeches of the evening. Initially, all guests were warmly



H.E. Dr. Gerhard Schröder, former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and Honorary Chairman of NUMOV

Gala Event 2008, located in the heart of Berlin. Host of this year's German Near and Middle Gala Event was Emirates Airlines, one of the best airlines worldwide.

The guests were able to meet with NUMOV-members, ambassadors, or representatives of several ministries. Members of a high-ranking government delegation from Iraq were also present at the evening. The Iraqi delegation was led by H.E. Hadi Al Hairi, State Secretary in Iraq's Ministry of Trade.

welcomed by Henry Hasselbarth, Vice-President for North and Central Europe of Emirates Airlines, and member of the Board of the German Orient Foundation. He thanked the Board of NUMOV for making the association to a very resourceful and successful organisation and expressed his pride in acting as the host for the NUMOV German Near and Middle East Gala Event 2008. He recalled the fact that Emirates has purchased a large number of Airbus aircraft, including the new Airbus A380. Models of the A380 jet in Emirates colours could be admired on

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## NUMOV's Annual Meeting 2008

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the "NUMOV-DIRECTORY of German Companies in the Near and Middle East" for the first time.

Two business delegations from the United Arab Emirates and from the Palestinian Territories on behalf of the Ministry of Economics and Technology were organized by NUMOV. The second and third German Near and Middle East Business Round Table were organised in Istanbul, Turkey and in Doha, Qatar. Moreover the NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST ECONOMIC HANDBOOK 2008 was finished as scheduled for the Annual Meeting and given away to the attending members, providing them with in-depth knowledge on the economies of the countries of the Near and Middle East. ●



## The European Union as a Partner of the Middle East

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*Dietlind Jehring, Director of the European Commission Representation in Berlin*

Euro-Mediterranean electricity grid, as part of an increasingly interconnected infrastructure system around the Mediterranean Sea. She pointed out that the situation in the Middle East is changing continually, but that the European Union is also

changing and is increasingly speaking with a centralized external voice. Nonetheless, she explained that the EU has to work harder to be perceived as a serious partner for the region and strongly called upon all participants to support the 'Union for the Mediterranean'. She also urged the German entrepreneurs to get involved in the region, as all political dialogue will remain inadequate without strong corresponding economic ties.

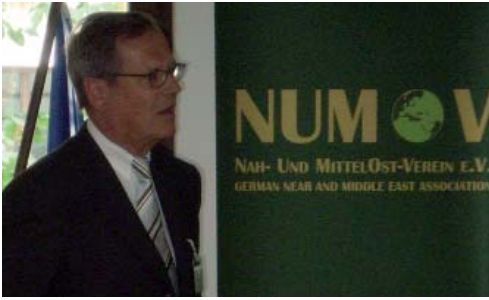
**Jan Hofmohl** from the European Commission's Directorate-General for External Relations took up the subject of entrepreneurial involvement and stressed the point that economic ties between the EU and the Euro-Mediterranean partner countries will eventually drive reforms. Addressing the point of why the EU does not use its product standards as an export item, unlike the USA, Hofmohl emphasized the commitment of the European Commission in ensuring the quality of products sold within the boundaries of the EU and the determination of the Commission to place customers' and citizens' satisfaction above economic incentives. However, the EU is determined to make information available to anyone wanting to enter the European market.



*H.E. Mohamed Al Orabi, the Egyptian Ambassador to Germany and Doyen of the Arab Diplomatic Corps in Berlin with Herbert Bodner, Chairman of the Executive Board of Bilfinger Berger AG and Member of the Board of NUMOV*

The presentations of the first panel were followed by a number of lively questions and a period of debate, before the second panel was introduced. This second panel focussed specifically on the relationship between the European Union and the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Entitled "The EU as a partner of the GCC", the panel was moderated by **Dr. Christian Koch**, Director of International Studies at the Gulf Research Center in Dubai. He pointed out that the GCC is the only successful sub-regional organization in the Middle East and that, while being a young organization, is





Klaus Eberhardt, Chairman of the Board of Rheinmetall AG and Member of the Board of NUMOV

growing and maturing successfully. Europe, he stated, is looked at favourably and is wanted in the Gulf, so that the EU can be effective in a number of areas. One part of this is trade and investment, and the negotiations for a free trade area between the EU and the GCC are moving ahead. But the two organizations are also engaging in a dialogue on security, politics and energy, and there is further scope for exchanges on education and culture.

The question of a dialogue between cultures was also touched upon by **Dietlind Jehring**, Director of the European Commission Representation in Berlin, who stressed the need to learn about the respective cultures. She welcomed all efforts to extend the relationships between the EU and the GCC and noted that this would likely lead to further integration on the GCC side. At the same time, however, she echoed previous speakers by noting that the visibility of Europe needs to be improved in the region. "Europe needs to be seen", she stressed.

**Dr. Mohamed Adil Nofal**, Deputy Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, used the opportunity to highlight the impressive economic development visible in Saudi Arabia. With a population growth of 3.5 percent, the Kingdom needs to further extend and upgrade its infrastructure and electricity grid and is seeking to become more attractive for foreign investment in these and other areas. Among the incentives for foreign entrepreneurs are the non-existence of the personal income-tax and the possibility of a 100 percent foreign ownership of an enterprise. Dr. Mohamed Adil Nofal also accentuated the country's many natural resources, other than oil, such as iron, gold, copper and zinc. He explicitly stated the commitment of Saudi Arabia to private sector growth.

**Dr. Volker Berresheim** from the Federal Foreign Office provided the audience with

a view on the inner mechanics of the talks between the GCC and the EU against the background of the global development. While the issues discussed between them are complex and complicated, both regions have

few alternatives to a stronger partnership in the future. He noted, however, that Europeans will have to be patient while the GCC establishes more strongly integrated structures, as the Europeans did in their own time.

**Herbert Bodner**, Chairman of the Executive Board of Bilfinger Berger AG and Member of the Board of NUMOV, provided the audience with first-hand impressions of



Prof. Dr. Gilles Kepel, University of Paris for Political Studies and Herbert Bodner, Chairman of the Executive Board of Bilfinger Berger AG and Member of the Board of NUMOV

doing large-scale business in the GCC. With a long and successful history of doing business in the region – among them the highway extension to Doha, the ongoing construction of a residential area in Qatar for 20,000 inhabitants – he explained a number of key elements for success in the region. He stated that good service is usually rewarded with additional contracts, and that the sustainability of projects is increasingly becoming an issue in the Middle East, also in construction. He credited the GCC states with a very forthcoming and cooperative business environment and emphasised the willingness of the local entrepreneurs and contracting bodies to commit to a long-term cooperation. In this context, he predicted that Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) would become increasingly attractive in the future. However, he also mentioned that rising inflation might dampen the impressive



f.l.t.r.: Dr. Volker Berresheim, Federal Foreign Office; Dr. Christian Koch, Director of International Studies, Gulf Research Center, Dubai and Member of the Board of Trustees of the German Orient Foundation; Dr. Mohamed Adil Nofal, Deputy Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

economic development of the GCC. Finally, **Prof. Dr. Gilles Kepel** from the University of Paris for Political Studies argued that EU-GCC relations should hold a priority on the political agenda to foster political and economic stability. After all, the EU enjoys a good reputation and wields positive influence in the GCC region, and both trade areas are mutually dependent on one another. He also noted

that closer cooperation between the EU and the GCC could serve to alleviate concerns over the influence of sovereign wealth funds. Additionally, he joined most of his predecessors on the panel in a call for a more visible EU in the GCC, but extended this to highlight the EU's role in the controversial

negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. He expressed his hope that Iran would intensify its dialogue with the GCC and would eventually become a member – so that even more economic and social development could extend to the entire area of the Gulf.

After further discussion of some of the points raised by the speakers, the conference concluded with an expression of gratitude for all the panellists. Their contributions had provided the participants of the conference with food for thought and a greater understanding of the role that an increasingly integrated European Union is playing as a partner of the Near and Middle East.



Participants of the conference

## German Near and Middle East Gala Event 2008

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every table during the evening. Unfortunately, Henry Hasselbarth continued, the restrictive allocation of landing rights in Germany is currently preventing Emirates from offering direct flights between Dubai and Berlin or Stuttgart. However, he expressed his hope that Emirates would soon be able to welcome the present guests on a non-stop flight to Dubai, and provide them with the same Emirates hospitality as during the German Near and Middle East Gala Event 2008.

**Martin Bay**, Chairman of the Board of Managing Directors of German Railway Group International and Chairman of the Board of NUMOV, welcomed the assembled guests very warmly. He noted that German companies are increasingly paying attention to the changes taking place in the Middle East and the vast business opportunities associated with them. The region is developing rapidly, both economically and socially, and he pointed out that Germany has much to offer the region in this phase. Many German companies are market leaders in their areas, be it in environmental technology, machinery, logistics, engineering or health. This alone, however, is not enough he said, emphasizing that German companies have to make greater efforts to be visible in the region and to be recognized as reliable long-term partners. NUMOV assists in providing this visibility, and the strong growth in membership, including international members, demonstrates its success. Martin Bay emphasized, however, that the accomplishments of NUMOV would not have been possible without its partners. He explicitly thanked H.E. Dr. Gerhard Schröder, the former Federal Chancellor and Honorary Chairman of NUMOV, for his efforts to build bridges of friendship between Germany and the region. He also thanked the Ambassadors from the Middle Eastern states in Berlin, as their



cooperation has been of particular importance to the ongoing work of NUMOV throughout the year. He also extended this gratitude to the German Ambassadors in the region, who have proven to be very reliable partners for NUMOV projects. For this reason, Martin Bay stated that there was much to celebrate during this Gala Event. The participants were able to meet members from a wide range of fields and to speak to them in an informal, relaxed and jovial atmosphere.

**H.E. Dr. Gerhard Schröder**, former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and Honorary Chairman of NUMOV, took up the friendly atmosphere in his speech. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a friendly dialogue between Germany and the region of the Middle East.

Because an Iraqi delegation was present, he seized the opportunity and called for a sustainable strategy in Iraq, which would necessarily involve talks





with all of Iraq's neighbours. He also expressed his expectation that the multinational forces would be withdrawn in an orderly manner in the foreseeable future.

The assembled ambassadors, as well as the members and guests of NUMOV heartily welcomed this statement of the former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. In fact, his statement garnered a huge and lasting round of applause from all attendants.

H.E. Dr. Gerhard Schröder continued his celebratory and lively speech with a remark on the continuous importance of the region not only for international trade but also as an integral part of the international community with which relations on every level are improving continually. He concluded his speech with a praise of NUMOV being the vanguard of this positive development and also being very successful and well-suited at initiating relations on a very high and exclusive level.

NUMOV would thus proceed to facilitate Germany's relations with the Middle East in the field of international understanding, culture and science.

**H.E. Mohamed Al Orabi**, the Egyptian Ambassador and Doyen of the Arab Diplomatic Corps in Berlin, also held a brief address. He thanked NUMOV for its efforts to enhance the relationship between Germany and the countries of the region, speaking also on behalf of the other ambassadors of the Middle Eastern states.

He also explicitly welcomed the Iraqi delegation and emphasized their role in rebuilding their country. Additionally, he thanked H.E. Dr. Gerhard Schröder for his speech and the vision for international cooperation it expressed.

H.E. Mohamed Al Orabi noted that, in some areas, such cooperation is well under way. For example, six million German visitors travel to the Middle East every year, indirectly expressing their trust in the region's states. Additionally, H.E. mentioned the German University in Cairo, which is a great step in the direction of improved education and also ties Germany more closely together with Egypt and the Middle East region as a whole. He emphasized that German politics and German business enjoy great credibility in the entire region, and encouraged all guests of the evening to become involved and enjoy the warm hospitality of the Middle East.

The evening concluded with an informal mingling of the many guests in the gardens of the Kronprinzenpalais.

Representatives from the German Federal Ministries and embassies could exchange views with the German business community, gaining new insights into development and business opportunities in the region.

The NUMOV German Near and Middle East Gala Event 2008 was clearly a successful and enjoyable evening, which raises the anticipation of NUMOV's anniversary event next year.