Asalamu alaykum.

I am honoured to be here in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to pay my respects to the legacy of the late Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. I extend personal condolences to all members of the Royal Family, the Government and people.

King Abdullah helped to realize progress in Saudi Arabia, guiding it to remarkable prosperity. He worked to tackle regional and international challenges and address counter-terrorism at a time of turmoil and change. I especially welcomed his important initiatives to promote inter-faith dialogue.

King Abdullah also provided vital humanitarian support through the United Nations – and was named a “Champion in the Battle Against Hunger” by the World Food Programme.

I was personally honoured to welcome King Abdullah in 2008 as the first Saudi Head of State to address the United Nations General Assembly to initiate interfaith dialogue with world leaders.

I look forward to continuing our fruitful cooperation with the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz. We had a very fruitful meeting today.

We shared views on the vital importance of sustainable development and climate change, and measures to advance towards this goal, including renewable energy. We talked about the very serious situation in Yemen, and I briefed him on the work of my Special Envoy Jamal Benomar. We agreed that everything possible must be done to reduce terrorism, both from Yemen and from Da’esh.

I informed the King about the important humanitarian Summit that is being graciously hosted by the Amir of Kuwait on 31 March to raise funds for the people of Syria and the neighbouring countries affected by the Syrian conflict.

The King reaffirmed his support for the Arab Peace Initiative, which I warmly welcomed. He and I shared our concerns about the dire plight of the people of Gaza, who urgently need assistance.
We also discussed how the United Nations can contribute to global efforts to counter terrorism, and I thanked His Majesty for the continued support of Saudi Arabia.

I had good talks with other senior officials, such as His Excellency Mr. Ali bin Ibrahim Al-Naimi, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, and Dr. Nizar bin Obaid Madani, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, on regional peace and security issues, development, climate change and other common concerns. I also met with His Excellency Mr. Abdul Latif bin Rashed Al Zayani, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I appreciate Saudi Arabia’s engagement as a member of the Friends of Yemen.

My Special Advisor Jamal Benomar is now in Yemen facilitating a way out of the current political crisis and a return to the path of the peaceful political transition. He is working closely with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, other Gulf Cooperation Council countries and members of the UN Security Council. I urge full support for these vital efforts.

I am also profoundly concerned about the appalling crimes that continue to be committed in Syria by all sides.

A solution to the crisis will only be found through political negotiations. At the same time, we must urgently do more for the many people who are suffering.

I am grateful to the Government of Saudi Arabia for its outstanding generosity, and I count on its continued support. I have asked the Saudi authorities to send a high-level delegation to the Syrian Pledging Conference to be held on March 31st in Kuwait.

The recent meetings in Cairo and Moscow emphasised the need to find a political solution based on the Geneva Communiqué. I welcome the international re-engagement for a political solution. I also welcome Saudi Arabia’s proposal for a follow-up meeting.

Turning to Iraq, I hope the reopening of the Kingdom’s embassy in Baghdad and the establishment of its Consulate in Erbil will help deepen cooperation between the two countries, including on countering terrorism.

The UN stands ready to support the region in developing a comprehensive and joint response to the threat of Da’esh.

The United Nations is working to address terrorism around the world through Security Council resolutions and committees, the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, nearly 20 legal instruments, and the Counter-Terrorism Centre which received such generous support from His Majesty King Abdullah.
I encourage the Government of Saudi Arabia to maintain its strong engagement with the UN so that we can rise to the many challenges facing this region and our world. Progress demands that we protect human rights, including the rights of women, and uphold all fundamental freedoms.

Based on my very good meetings, I resolve to strengthen our partnership to achieve progress in realizing the vision of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Thank you.