



THE EU-GCC COOPERATION ON  
GREEN TRANSITION PROJECT



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EU-KSA BUSINESS & INVESTMENT DIALOGUE:  
**ADVANCING CRITICAL RAW  
MATERIALS VALUE CHAINS**

**EVENT SUMMARY REPORT**  
January 2026

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The EU-KSA Business & Investment Dialogue: Advancing Critical Raw Materials (CRMs) Value Chains was held on 15 January 2026 at 15:30, as part of the Future Minerals Forum (FMF) at the King Abdulaziz International Conference Center, Riyadh. The high-level dialogue convened around 60 senior policymakers, industry leaders, and financial institutions from the European Union and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Organised by the EU-GCC Cooperation on Green Transition Project, in coordination with the EU Delegation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the European Chambers of Commerce in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and in close cooperation with the Future Minerals Forum, the session provided a focused platform to advance practical EU-KSA cooperation across critical raw materials value chains, within a broader GCC, MENA, and Africa context. Discussions were aligned with Saudi Vision 2030 and the EU Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA).

Opening remarks by H.E. Christophe Farnaud, EU Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Oman & Bahrain, and H.E. Turki Albabtain, Deputy Minister for Mining Development (MIM), underscored the strategic importance of critical raw materials for the green and digital transitions, industrial competitiveness, and economic security. Mr Valère Moutarlier, Deputy Director-General for Industry, DG GROW, delivered the keynote, highlighting the EU's priorities under the CRMA and the importance of international partnerships to translate policy frameworks into concrete projects.

A moderated roundtable discussion, led by Mr Spyros Kouvelis, Team Leader of the EU-GCC Cooperation on Green Transition, brought together Mr Giulio Gentile (DG MENA), Ms Hana Jalloul Muro (Member of the European Parliament), and Mr Stephan Pueschel (KfW). The discussion focused on moving from strategic alignment to bankable investment, highlighting opportunities in processing, refining, recycling, and downstream value chains, the role of long-term offtake agreements, blended finance and de-risking instruments, and the importance of ESG standards, transparency, and traceability.

The dialogue confirmed strong mutual interest in deepening EU-KSA cooperation on critical raw materials, identifying concrete pathways for business engagement and investment and laying the groundwork for continued collaboration under the FMF framework, including potential triangular cooperation across the GCC, MENA, and Africa.







## Opening Remarks

### **H.E. Christophe Farnaud, Ambassador of the European Union to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Sultanate of Oman**

H.E. Farnaud opened the session by positioning critical raw materials as a strategic cornerstone of the green and digital transitions, industrial competitiveness, and economic security. He noted that global CRM supply chains remain highly concentrated and exposed to disruption, and underlined that the EU's response—through the Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA)—is designed to improve resilience through diversification, strengthening processing/refining, scaling recycling, and building strategic partnerships.

Key messages included:

- CRMs are no longer a niche topic, but foundational to renewables, mobility, advanced manufacturing, and defense-related supply chains.
- The CRMA signals a shift toward resilient and responsible supply chains, not market closure.
- Saudi Arabia is a strategic partner given its ambition to develop a fully integrated minerals and materials sector (beyond extraction), aligned with Vision 2030 and downstream industrial localization.
- Sustainability (high ESG standards, transparency, traceability) was framed as a long-term partnership enabler and a competitive advantage.
- The dialogue was presented as a business and investment platform to identify concrete opportunities spanning upstream development to downstream manufacturing and financing—while also serving as a building block for broader regional engagement across the GCC, MENA, and Africa.



## Welcome Remarks

### H.E. Turki Albabtain, Deputy Minister for Mining Development, Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources (MIM), Saudi Arabia

H.E. Albabtain highlighted Europe's dependencies and the growing importance of stable CRM access for industrial strategy. He underlined that Saudi Arabia's approach is to build integrated value chains—from extraction through processing and finished products—rather than exporting commodities.

Key points included:

- Saudi Arabia's competitive advantages:
  - a. Energy availability and cost competitiveness (low-cost gas and renewables), enabling products such as low-carbon aluminum and green steel.
  - b. Mineral endowment, including major phosphate reserves and aluminum capacity, alongside broader critical mineral potential.
  - c. A clear strategic direction to become a global hub with downstream integration and value chain participation.
- Proposed collaboration areas included:
  - Green steel / low-carbon DRI to support European downstream industries (e.g., automotive, renewables).
  - Low-carbon aluminum for EV manufacturing, solar components, and aerospace.
  - Phosphate and fertilizers to support EU food security and supply reliability.
- Concrete enablers proposed:
  - Mid- to long-term offtake agreements to provide market certainty for producers and supply certainty for EU industry.
  - Joint processing/refining hubs and joint ventures (including lithium processing, rare earth refining, specialty steel and aluminum).
  - Blended finance approaches combining European and Saudi financing capabilities to accelerate development and strengthen ESG performance.
- H.E. Albabtain emphasized the opportunity to move "from dialogue to action," underscoring the timeliness of the CRMA and the shared interest in building diversified, resilient supply chains.





### **Keynote Introduction**

**Mr Valère Moutarlier, Deputy Director-General for Industry, DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW), European Commission**

Mr Moutarlier reinforced the strategic framing that CRMs have become “the oil of today” due to their role in enabling renewable energy technologies, electrification, advanced manufacturing, and defense supply chains. He emphasized that the EU’s current dependency profile is not sustainable, and that the EU is moving quickly through the CRMA and an integrated “Team Europe” approach.

Key messages included:

- The EU has established a legal framework to identify and support strategic projects across the value chain—extraction, processing, and recycling—within the EU and internationally.
- A pipeline of strategic projects was referenced spanning multiple materials and stages of the value chain, reflecting an effort to build market conditions for viable investment and supply security.
- International partnerships are essential: the EU’s targets cannot be achieved in isolation, making cooperation with international partners critical.
- The EU-Saudi Arabia cooperation on CRM is called to grow stronger, which opens the door to cooperation on CRM value chains.
- There are many areas that are relevant to industrial value chain, where we can advance together, ranging from technologies, ESG, geological mapping to skills and investment mobilization.
- The keynote closed with a clear call to convert frameworks and discussions into deliverable business-to-business relationships supported by the enabling role of public policy and financing instruments.



## **Moderated Roundtable Discussion**

**Moderator: Mr Spyros Kouvelis, Team Leader, EU–GCC Cooperation on Green Transition**

**Speakers:**

- **Mr Giulio Gentile, Deputy Head of Unit for the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, DG MENA, European Commission**
- **Ms Hana Jalloul Muro, Member of the European Parliament**
- **Mr Stephan Pueschel, Director – Co-head Metals & Mining, KfW (Germany)**

### **From strategic intent to bankable projects: enabling conditions (DG MENA)**

Mr Gentile highlighted that critical raw materials sit at the intersection of economic security, industrial resilience, and international partnerships. He noted the EU's institutional effort to strengthen engagement with Gulf partners and the importance of turning “paper” (frameworks and MoUs) into implementable projects.

### **Practical conditions and mechanisms discussed included:**

- Knowledge sharing and alignment on standards, certification, responsible sourcing, transparency, and traceability.
- Matchmaking between Saudi and European businesses, with this roundtable presented as an early model to build upon.
- De-risking tools and guarantees on the EU side to lower the cost of borrowing and unlock investment into CRM value chains.
- Building a structured pipeline that supports investment in Saudi Arabia, Europe, and—where relevant—third countries.





### **From strategic intent to bankable projects: enabling conditions (DG MENA)**

Parliamentary priorities: sustainability, value creation, and public legitimacy (European Parliament)

Ms Jalloul Muro emphasized that CRMs have become a high priority in the European Parliament, increasingly treated not only as an industrial issue but as a trade and strategic autonomy issue. She highlighted the political sensitivity around dependencies, concentration risk, and supply disruptions.

#### **Key expectations articulated included:**

- Partnerships should deliver clear benefits beyond industrial supply—supporting local value creation, sustainable development, environmental protection, and high standards.
- EU CRM diplomacy is expanding through multiple partnership instruments globally, designed to avoid replicating past approaches that did not adequately support shared value creation or robust standards.
- The importance of mutual understanding and trust in EU–GCC cooperation was highlighted, alongside recognition that partnerships must be framed as equal-to-equal cooperation with shared interests.



### **Financing realities: what is hardest to finance and why (KfW)**

Mr Pueschel outlined the financing lens on CRMs—distinguishing “new spotlight” minerals and value chain segments where risk is most acute.

Two dominant risk categories were emphasized:

- Technical / processing risk, especially in scaling complex processing chains and rebuilding capacity outside dominant processing geographies.
- Price and market risk, including volatility and the impact of concentrated market structures on bankability.

KfW’s contribution was presented across the full value chain—mining, processing, metal production, and recycling—on a commercial basis, including:

- Financing linked to European equipment and/or offtake-linked structures, designed to crowd in additional commercial lenders.
- Reference to Germany’s raw materials fund (equity-oriented), supporting investments aligned with offtake needs for German/EU industry and partner-country development.

Project structuring factors that improve bankability were highlighted:

- A strong, experienced sponsor (often with local operational capabilities).
- Credible technical partners and proven technology.
- Clear offtake pathways and robust risk allocation, potentially alongside ECAs and other de-risking instruments.





### **Regional dimension: scope for triangular cooperation (GCC–MENA–Africa)**

The discussion acknowledged that EU–Saudi cooperation can also serve as a platform for broader value chain development in the region and in Africa—particularly where joint interests exist around supply diversification, standards, investment platforms, and enabling infrastructure.

Examples of potential pathways referenced included:

- Establishing investment platforms that convene financiers and project stakeholders around bankable pipelines.
- Linking CRM cooperation with enabling sectors where both sides are already active (renewables, clean tech, hydrogen, logistics/connectivity, and regulatory/standards alignment).
- Building cooperation models that support fair value distribution and local economic development in third-country contexts.

### **Audience Q&A and Open Discussion**

Two main interventions shaped the Q&A:

#### **Q1: Practical opportunities for EU–Saudi cooperation in Africa**

A participant highlighted the opportunity to collaborate in Africa to increase diversity of supply and combine complementary strengths (market access, financing, technology, and development outcomes). The response from the Saudi side stressed that:

- Africa is a strategic priority given existing relationships and demand for Saudi engagement.
- There is interest in pursuing cooperation models that go beyond extraction and support economic development and prosperity, including fair value distribution.



## **Q2: Blended finance and mobilizing European funding**

A question focused on how European funding commitments could be mobilized and amplified through cooperation with Saudi sovereign instruments.

Key points from responses included:

- Significant opportunity exists to align EU tools (de-risking, guarantees, concessional elements where applicable) with Saudi instruments (e.g., development and export/import finance capabilities).
- A need was emphasized to ensure tools “connect” effectively—through structured pipelines, shared risk frameworks, and clear project preparation.
- The EU perspective underlined that public intervention primarily exists to de-risk and enable; it cannot replace private sector leadership in bringing investable projects forward.

A closing intervention reinforced a clear message: public policy can create the conditions, but the transition from strategy to delivery requires the business community to bring projects, invest, and scale.





## **Key Takeaways and Emerging Outcomes**

### **Strong strategic alignment**

Clear convergence between the EU Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) and Saudi Vision 2030 mining ambitions, with a shared focus on resilience, integrated value chains, and industrial localization.

### **Shift toward downstream opportunities**

Growing emphasis on processing, refining, low-carbon metals, and recycling as priority areas for value creation and supply security.

### **Offtake agreements as a key enabler**

Mid- to long-term offtake structures identified as essential to provide market certainty and unlock project financing.

### **De-risking and blended finance**

EU and Saudi financing tools viewed as complementary in reducing risk, lowering the cost of capital, and accelerating bankable investments.

### **ESG and traceability at the core**

High environmental, social, and governance standards, transparency, and traceability positioned as central to long-term partnerships.

### **Potential for triangular cooperation**

Strong interest in EU–Saudi collaboration in third countries, including Africa, through shared standards and investment platforms.



## Suggested Follow-up Actions

### 1. Establish a structured EU–Saudi “CRM Deal Flow” track

Create a light mechanism to capture project concepts arising from matchmaking (processing/refining, low-carbon metals, recycling), and connect them with relevant financiers and de-risking instruments

### 2. Prioritize two to three “flagship” collaboration themes

Based on the discussion, early candidates could include:

- a. Low-carbon aluminum (EV/solar/aerospace supply chains)
- b. Green steel / low-carbon DRI (industrial decarbonization)
- c. Targeted processing/refining hubs aligned with EU needs and Saudi industrial capacity

### 3. Align on ESG/traceability pathways early

Develop a practical workstream on standards, certification, and traceability to reduce friction and accelerate bankability.

### 4. Map de-risking tools and entry points

Produce a short joint “finance pathway” overview (EU guarantees/instruments, ECA linkages, Saudi funds), clarifying how projects can access support and what eligibility criteria apply.

### 5. Explore a pilot triangular initiative

Identify one pilot geography and value chain where EU–Saudi cooperation can support supply diversification and local value creation (with clear governance and partner roles).



## MEDIA COVERAGE

The EU–KSA Business & Investment Dialogue on Advancing Critical Raw Materials Value Chains, held on 15 January 2026 in Riyadh as part of the Future Minerals Forum, received confirmed regional media coverage and visibility following the dissemination of the official press release, alongside broader amplification through institutional and professional channels.

### Online & Print Media Coverage

📰 Arab News published a dedicated news article on 16 January 2026, highlighting the objectives of the dialogue, senior-level participation from the European Union and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the strategic importance of strengthening EU–Saudi cooperation across critical raw materials value chains.

🔗 <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2629545/business-economy>

🔄 The Arab News article was republished online by Emiratilaw.com, extending the reach of the press coverage to additional regional audiences and professional readers.

🔗 [https://www.emiratilaw.com/Default.aspx/JSLIB/default.aspx?](https://www.emiratilaw.com/Default.aspx/JSLIB/default.aspx?Catid=2535&action=DisplayNews&id=35231&type=1)

[Catid=2535&action=DisplayNews&id=35231&type=1](https://www.emiratilaw.com/Default.aspx/JSLIB/default.aspx?Catid=2535&action=DisplayNews&id=35231&type=1)

🌐 Maaal, a Saudi-based economic and business news outlet, featured online coverage referencing the EU–Saudi dialogue on critical raw materials, situating the event within the broader context of strategic economic, industrial, and supply-chain cooperation between Saudi Arabia and international partners.

🔗 <https://maaal.com/en/news/details/eu-saudi-arabia-is-a-str/>

### SOCIAL MEDIA & DIGITAL AMPLIFICATION

The dialogue also achieved strong social and professional media visibility, extending its reach among policymakers, industry leaders, investors, and institutional stakeholders.

➡️ Arab News amplified its coverage through a dedicated LinkedIn post, increasing engagement among business and policy audiences.

🔗 [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/arabnews\\_first-eusaudi-roundtable-on-critical-raw-activity-7418200406578847744-KUHU](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/arabnews_first-eusaudi-roundtable-on-critical-raw-activity-7418200406578847744-KUHU)

➡️ EU- and partner-affiliated accounts further shared event highlights, visuals, and key messages across LinkedIn, X, and Instagram, reinforcing visibility of the dialogue within EU–Saudi and wider GCC stakeholder networks.

🔗 European Chamber (Eurocham KSA) – X:

<https://x.com/eurochamksa/status/2012842065114042533>

🔗 Instagram – Event visual coverage:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DTm8N5yk-vl/>



[Click to view highlight video](#)

# ABOUT THE PROJECT

## THE EU-GCC COOPERATION ON GREEN TRANSITION PROJECT



Launched in August 2023, this project funded by the European Union marks a significant milestone in the long partnership between the European Union (EU) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). By addressing critical global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development, the project builds upon the EU-GCC Cooperation Agreement Document signed in 1989. The Joint Action Programme for 2022-2027 endorsed in February 2022 outlines the strategic framework for cooperation, emphasizing the need to join forces in addressing climate change and make progress on green transition. This project reflects the shared commitment to leveraging EU expertise to deepen cooperation and engagement, promote green policies and technologies, and create a conducive business environment for collaboration among energy-related and green tech companies in the Gulf.

### KEY OBJECTIVES

The project aims to strengthen political and technical relationships at regional and bilateral levels by:

- Deepening engagement towards green transition and climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Promoting the uptake of green transition policies and technologies by the GCC countries.
- Facilitating a conducive business environment between EU and GCC green tech companies in the Gulf region.

### IMPACT

- Enhanced knowledge exchange on climate action and green transition.
- Raised awareness on climate change, sustainable practices and circular economy.
- Strengthened network for collaboration in green solutions and energy transition.
- Proactive EU Climate Diplomacy in the region.

### STAKEHOLDERS

- State and non-state institutions, business community, & environmental NGOs.
- Researchers, academia, youth groups, & media outlets.
- EU and GCC businesses, particularly SMEs.
- EU Member States present in the GCC.

### FOCUS AREAS



#### GREEN TRANSITION

Promote transformative change for green transition policies & practices within the GCC.



#### NET ZERO CARBON

Implement solutions for reducing carbon emissions in industrial & public sectors.



#### HYDROGEN MARKET

Support the development of a renewable hydrogen market in the Gulf region.



#### CLEAN-TECH SOLUTIONS

Foster innovations in renewable energy technologies & clean-tech industries.



#### CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

Strengthen resilience & adaptive capacities to climate-related hazards.



#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Launch initiatives to preserve biodiversity & natural habitats, including marine protection.



#### CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Encourage the adoption of sustainable waste management & resource efficiency.



#### SUSTAINABLE FINANCE

Engage financial institutions in channelling investment & finance in support of green transition.



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