

YEMEN - EMERGING DEMOCRACIES FORUM  
John Duke Anthony

Although not a GCC member-state, the policies and actions of neighboring Yemen are regularly analyzed in light of their possible implications for the concerns and interests of the GCC countries. Yemen's hosting of the world's first-ever Emerging Democracies Forum June 28-30 was no exception.

The presidents, former presidents, prime ministers, and the heads of ruling as well as opposition political parties of 16 less-developed countries, as well as leading U.S., UN, Canadian, Dutch, German, Japanese, and other officials, participated. "GulfWire's" publisher and senior analyst, an International Observer in each of Yemen's Parliamentary elections (1993 and 1997), attended and participated in the Forum's concurrent small group seminars on Political Transition and Economic Restructuring; Elections and Legislatures; Democratic Decisionmaking; and Improving Administration, Transparency, and the Rule of Law.

The Forum was the brain-child of Yemeni President Ali Abdallah Saleh and Prime Minister Dr. 'Abd Al-Karim Al-Iryani. Organized and implemented by the U.S. Congress-funded National Democratic Institute (NDI), led by Kenneth Wallach, the event was the capstone of a year-long planning effort that engaged the input and comment of, among others, U.S. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. Mrs. Clinton delivered a major address to the Forum's participants live by closed-circuit TV.

Among the Forum's sponsors were the Governments of Canada, Great Britain, Japan, the Netherlands, and the United States as well as the United Nations. Full delegations from countries as diverse as Benin and Bolivia, as Georgia, Ghana and Guyana, as Mali, Malawi, Mongolia, Morocco, and Mozambique, and six other developing nations were all present in force. The U.S. delegation, headed by Under-Secretary of State for Global Affairs Frank Loy and Deputy USAID Administrator Sally Shelton-Colby, comprised the highest level American official representation to visit Yemen since the 1990-91 Kuwait crisis.

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