



21 April 2020

A Cháirde

Dear Friends

We hope that you, your families, colleagues and friends are keeping safe and healthy during what is a difficult time for everyone. The COVID-19 global health emergency has brought normal life to a standstill in a way that none of us could have envisaged but hopefully we can all fully resume our personal and business lives in the not too distant future.

The Irish Embassies in Abu Dhabi and Riyadh have, between them, responsibility for promoting and protecting Ireland's interests in six Gulf countries - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

As the two responsible ambassadors, we wanted to take this opportunity, as we all continue our efforts to overcome this global crisis, to reach out to you, our community, business, official, political, cultural, media, academic and other contacts in the Gulf region.

We want to thank you all for your support, to assure you that we are here to support you in turn and to reiterate how important our relationships with you are to our work and how critical they will be to us as we address new challenges in the post-COVID-19 world.



Since the start of this pandemic, our embassies, in cooperation with other Irish embassies in the Middle East, have been working closely together to assist our citizens in the region. We could not have done this without the help of our colleagues, friends and partners.

We would like, first of all, to acknowledge the guidance and cooperation of our colleagues in each of foreign ministries in the countries to which we are accredited. At a challenging time for everybody, they have been professional and helpful at some very difficult junctures.

We would also like to express our appreciation to our Honorary Consuls in Manama and Muscat for the great work they have been doing on behalf of Ireland and the Irish communities.

A particular word of thanks to our EU and UK colleagues, with whom we have co-operated in helping Irish citizens return home, with flights via Amsterdam, London, Paris, Rome, Vienna, Zagreb, Zurich and other destinations.

We would also like to pay tribute to the Irish communities themselves who have risen to the occasion and, like Irish people at home, have responded in a measured and sensible way to this crisis. It is especially important that we stay in touch with each other at what is a challenging and stressful time. Irish business networks, societies and GAA clubs across the region continue to work on behalf of the wider community; we are very grateful to them for their ongoing support.



We are all very focused on our physical health, and rightly so, but we would also remind you of the importance of taking care of your mental health at this time. We would encourage you all to consult the HSE guidelines which are available online:

<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/covid-19/minding-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>

Most importantly of all, we would like to express a huge “Go raibh míle maith agaibh” or “Thank You” to our frontline health workers here in the Gulf region. A significant proportion of the Irish community in this region work here as healthcare professionals. We are extremely grateful to them for their dedication and enormously proud of their service to the whole community.

Ireland has a very strong team here in the Gulf, with regional offices of Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia, Tourism Ireland and IDA Ireland, all supported by a very strong and active Irish business community. That there is such a strong Irish presence in the Gulf region is testament to the region’s strategic importance to us as a political, economic, business, trade, tourism and cultural partner.

While the priority right now is to overcome this global crisis, Ireland is also preparing for the post-COVID-19 recovery phase, with a whole-of-Government response which includes a range of supports to facilitate businesses getting up and running as quickly as possible once this emergency has passed.



In that context, we are both, with our Embassy teams, already looking at how we will consolidate and grow Ireland's presence, profile and network of relationships in the Gulf region in the post-COVID-19 world.

We look forward to re-connecting and discussing with you all in person how we can best achieve this once the current crisis has passed. If, in the meantime, you want to share any ideas as to how we can strengthen our relationships in the period ahead, we would be delighted to hear from you.

We will continue to provide regular updates via our Twitter accounts: @IrelandEmbUAE and @IrishEmbRiyadh.

Please Stay Safe.

Le gach dea ghuí

With best wishes

Gerard McCoy
Ambassador of Ireland
Riyadh

Aidan Cronin
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Abu Dhabi