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A Security and Prosperity Agenda for the 2026 EU-GCC Summit

Practical pathways for energy security, investment, maritime stability and regional
diplomacy.

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EXECUTIVE JUDGEMENT

The next EU-GCC summit should move from a broad catalogue of cooperation to a limited delivery agenda that connects energy and trade with maritime security, investment, regional de-escalation and institutional follow-through.

Key findings

- The relationship is strategically important but will be judged by delivery between summits rather than communicate breadth.
- Energy security should expand into grids, clean technology, industrial investment and crisis coordination.
- Maritime security and corridor resilience provide a practical field for shared institutional work.
- Sustainable partnership requires reciprocal clarity on regional security concerns and economic expectations.

A mature partnership requires choices

The first EU-GCC summit confirmed a common interest in trade, investment, energy, connectivity and regional stability. The next summit should resist the temptation to add more headings without a delivery mechanism. A concise agenda with named institutional owners and review dates would carry greater strategic weight than a comprehensive declaration whose implementation is difficult to track.

Energy and industrial cooperation

Hydrocarbon supply remains important, but the partnership should encompass electricity interconnection, hydrogen and low-carbon fuels, methane management, critical infrastructure, investment standards and industrial projects. Producer-consumer dialogue is especially valuable when it includes behaviour during market stress and creates predictable channels before a crisis.

Maritime stability and connectivity

The Red Sea, Gulf and eastern Mediterranean connect European and Gulf prosperity. Cooperation can include maritime domain awareness, port security, seafarer protection, customs digitalisation, subsea infrastructure and crisis exercises. These practical projects build trust while supporting wider diplomatic efforts to prevent escalation.

Diplomatic candour and institutional continuity

A strategic partnership does not require identical positions. It requires reliable channels for discussing differences, protecting cooperation from episodic shocks and identifying where joint action is possible. A permanent implementation group should report to foreign ministers and prepare a public progress record before the following summit.

From summit language to joint delivery

A mature EU-GCC relationship should be measured by the number of jointly owned problems that move from dialogue to implementation.

Each priority workstream should have two accountable leads, one European and one Gulf, supported by a small technical group and a public milestone. The design should distinguish political consultation from commercial negotiation and expert cooperation. This prevents summit declarations from becoming containers for unrelated initiatives and gives officials a basis for resolving delays before the next high-level meeting.

The agenda should remain selective. Maritime incident communication, energy-system resilience, investment standards, digital infrastructure and crisis diplomacy are areas where interests overlap even when political positions differ. Progress does not require rhetorical convergence on every regional dispute. It requires a disciplined ability to preserve contact, identify practical reciprocity and state disagreement without suspending the entire relationship.

- Adopt a six-month joint delivery review for every summit workstream.
- Create protected contact networks for maritime, energy and consular disruption.
- Invite business and expert participation only where a defined decision pathway exists.

Institutional safeguards

Continuity requires records, handover arrangements and evaluation that do not depend on individual relationships.

A compact secretariat should maintain decisions, deadlines and points of contact while respecting the mandates of the EU institutions, member states and GCC bodies. Confidential exchanges should produce protected summaries that distinguish agreed action, unresolved questions and institutional analysis. Public communication should report verified progress without attributing private diplomatic discussion.

- Use one controlled decision register across political and technical tracks.
- Publish outcomes and milestones without naming confidential participants.

Policy recommendations

- Adopt five summit deliverables with named owners, financing routes and review dates.
- Establish an EU-GCC energy-security and industrial-investment dialogue.
- Launch a maritime corridor resilience programme covering ports, information and exercises.
- Create a structured consultation channel on regional de-escalation and conflict prevention.

- Publish an annual implementation record agreed by both secretariats.

Indicators to watch

- Implementation milestones
- Two-way investment flows
- Joint maritime projects
- Frequency and quality of political consultations

Scope and analytical method

Practical pathways for energy security, investment, maritime stability and regional diplomacy. The paper tests the issue against institutional authority, delivery capacity, political sustainability and the interests of affected partners. It separates confirmed developments from interpretation and identifies the conditions under which recommendations would need to change.

The analysis is based on a structured review of official institutional material and current primary sources. It distinguishes formal decisions and verified facts from institutional assessment and forward-looking judgement. Recommendations are tested against authority, delivery capacity, timing, political sustainability and the interests of external partners.

Public sources cannot capture classified readiness data, commercially sensitive contracting information or confidential diplomatic exchanges. Time-sensitive figures and legal developments should therefore be refreshed by responsible authorities before an operational decision is taken.

Sources and method

The sources below establish the public evidentiary basis for this paper. Interpretation and recommendations remain the responsibility of the Research Directorate. Principal public sources:

- Council of the EU, first EU-GCC Summit

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