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US to work with KSA to ensure global health security: Envoy



Emir of Riyadh Prince Faisal Bin Bandar inaugurated the C3 Saudi-US Healthcare Forum 2015 on Monday evening.

The opening ceremony was also attended by Joseph W. Westphal, the US ambassador to Saudi Arabia, and Khalid Bin Abdullah Al-Araj, minister of civil service and acting minister of health, along with a number of other officials.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Westphal said the United States was ready to work with the Kingdom to ensure health security around the world.

Adel Abdul Shakoor, president of event organizers XS Conferences & Exhibitions, expressed his thanks to the emir for attending what he called “the biggest event in healthcare”.

“Today we launch the largest and most important healthcare event dedicated to building new relationships, fostering existing partnerships, and exchanging best practices between the Middle East and the US,” he said.

Later, Secretary-General of the Health Services Council and head of organizing



committee Dr. Yacoub Bin Youssef Al-Mazrou stressed the importance of holding such forums to promote dialogue, foster existing relationships and to facilitate new ventures and opportunities among Saudis and Americans in the field of healthcare.

He pointed out that the government of Saudi Arabia has given high priority to the development of healthcare services at all levels.

He said: “We are witnessing an improved sector and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has succeeded to combat the threats of many diseases.”

Westphal shared his unique perspective on the Kingdom, reminding attendees of the “excellent” public and private sector collaboration and commerce on health-related issues.

In his speech, he said: “President Obama recently said that we need to start thinking about risks to global health as a security threat — in addition to being humanitarian and economic threats.

“We have to bring the same level of commitment and focus to these challenges as we do to more traditional security issues.

“With this principle in view, the president launched the Global Health Security Agenda in February last year.”

Westphal went on to state that Saudi Arabia is a leader in the Global Health Security Agenda.

“The Kingdom is not only committed to expanding its own healthcare capabilities, but also to assuming a leadership role in encouraging other nations to do so at the same time.

“We are fortunate to have Saudi Arabia as partner in the Global Health Security Agenda.”

Speaking about the joint cooperation between the two countries, he said: “One example of our fruitful cooperation on public health is our joint work on the MERS-Coronavirus outbreak here in Saudi Arabia and around the globe, including a few cases in the United States.”

He noted that while infectious disease outbreaks grab headlines both countries must work together.

“Both the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States face major challenges in how we will deal with the exponential increase in non-communicable diseases,



such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

“Working together to conduct scientific and medical research, we can help each other and the rest of the world slow the spread of these terrible diseases, which are afflicting both our people and our economies.”

He underlined the importance of dealing with health as an economic threat.

“The estimated cost of treatment and lost economic output due to non-communicable diseases in the United States alone is well over \$1 trillion, and rising.

“In the next 10 years, it is estimated that the cost of these diseases to our economy will be over \$4 trillion.”

He noted that the “staggering” health and economic costs of these diseases must motivate all to cooperate more closely with global partners, including Saudi Arabia, to curb these serious health threats.

He concluded his remarks by saying: “Our government, businesses and academic institutions are ready to develop long-time partnerships and establish new ones with Saudi Arabia.

“The United States stands ready to work with Saudi Arabia in this critical effort toward health security.”

In conclusion, Prince Faisal honored sponsors and organizers and at the same time the US ambassador presented the Global Leadership and Excellence Award to the emir.

The award was presented on behalf of the National Council on US-Saudi Relations.