



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES

RIYADH • SAUDI ARABIA



Prosperity through Charity and Community

By James B. Smith



In the United States and much of the Western world, the end of the Gregorian calendar year is an important time for celebration and gathering together as families and communities. As students return home for the break between semesters and many individuals travel great distances across America to spend time with their families and love ones, we reflect on the year that is ending and anticipate the next. I am personally thankful for the work the U.S. Embassy has done here in Saudi Arabia in cooperation with the Saudi

government and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah. The United States and Saudi Arabia have enjoyed an important and longstanding relationship that I look forward to strengthening, not only in the coming year but for many more years to come.

When I reflect on this year, I cannot help but think about the role individuals have in creating a community and supporting each other through that community. The United States has a culture of giving and joining together through charities to help those who are less fortunate. This is something that we as Americans have in common with the Muslim World, which places a high value on charity and giving as one of the pillars of Islam. Here in Saudi Arabia, just like in the United States, charitable organizations provide food, shelter, educational supplies and other support to those who are in need. Helping is not solely the responsibility of individuals, but also one of the roles of the government. The Kingdom has focused its resources on a number of areas to better meet the needs of its citizens and residents.

One of the most important ways a government can meet people's needs is by providing them with meaningful opportunities. King Abdullah and his government have opened new career fields to men and women and provided numerous opportunities for young Saudis to pursue their education both inside and outside of the Kingdom. Although some of these initiatives may take time to show results, they are important investments in the future. The Kingdom has also dedicated resources to look after people's health by establishing new hospitals and taking steps to improve services in existing hospitals. A government that meets its people's needs is a government that is built on a strong foundation. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been blessed with wise leadership, great wealth, security and stability in a time of regional political change. King Abdullah has demonstrated a vision to meet the needs of the Saudi people by building up the Kingdom's infrastructure and directing its resources to benefit the Saudi society, in addition to investing in the most important resource Saudi Arabia has: its people.

Of course, economic growth and development are critical in making it financially possible for a government to meet the needs of its people. This month, the sixth session of the Riyadh Economic Forum took place under the patronage of King Abdullah to look at important topics such as administrative and financial corruption, issues facing the construction sector and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the national economy. Each of these themes is critical to



sustaining a strong economy that will allow the government to provide necessary services to its people.

As we reflect on the year 2012 and prepare to enter 2013, we are thankful for the longstanding and important relationship that the United States has maintained with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I am confident that the Kingdom will continue working hard to address the needs of its own people and help others in the region and the greater Muslim World.

President Barack Obama concludes his first term as president next month. In 2009 leading up to the 100th day of his administration, he issued a challenge to the American people when he said; “I ask every American to make an enduring commitment to serving your community and your country in whatever way you can... And together, we will measure our progress not just in number of hours served or volunteers mobilized – but in the impact our efforts have on the life of this nation.” As we end a year and welcome a new one, I encourage all of us to join with our families and communities in this same spirit to continue to give back; it’s part of who we are as a human community.

James B. Smith is the United States Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.