Dear Colleagues,

As you may have already seen, yesterday, Mohamed Al Khaja, the UAE’s first-ever Ambassador to Israel made history, when he presented his credentials to Israeli President Reuven Rivlin.

Prior to the ceremony, Ambassador Al Khaja met with Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi to discuss growing bilateral relations since the signing of the Abraham Accords in September 2020, as well as enhancing cooperation in various fields.

To mark this occasion, Ambassador Al Khaja and his Israeli counterpart, head of Mission in Abu Dhabi Eitan Na’eh, authored a joint commentary that was published in English (The National), Arabic (Al Ittihad) and Hebrew (Yediot Ahranoth print edition). “Conflict can last for generations, but peace can happen in an instant,” they write.

See below for photos of Ambassador Al Khaja’s meetings with President Rivlin and Foreign Minister Ashkenazi. For continuing updates, follow Ambassador Al Khaja on Twitter at @AmbAIKhaja.

The full text to the article is below, and please don’t hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

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When an Emirati and an Israeli diplomat meet

Mohamed Al Khaja and Eitan Na’eh
March 1, 2021

Six months ago, an Emirati and Israeli diplomat were unlikely to be seen together, much less co-author a newspaper article. Opening up direct relations and embassies seemed even more farfetched. But here we are now, an Emirati ambassador in Israel and an Israeli head of mission in the UAE in public, together, writing in one voice.

Conflict can last for generations, but peace can happen in an instant. With that diplomatic flash last summer, our nations and our people are now in a rush to make up for lost time. The speed of normalisation has been nothing less than breathtaking, even amid a worldwide pandemic and the regular challenges of sharing the world’s most troubled neighbourhood.

We are diplomats, representatives of our nations and agents of warming ties between the UAE and Israel. We believe in the power of our profession, that building trust through open and direct ties, combined with bold political leadership, can produce regional transformations.

Over these recent weeks, we now meet and talk often. Our conversations focus on growing economic ties, trade and tourism, health and educational exchanges and deepening people-to-people contacts. We facilitate and update each other on the near-daily announcements of new agreements between our universities, research institutes, start-ups and medical centres. Just last week, we recognised the joint partnership between the Mohamed Bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence and the Weizmann Institute of Science. We celebrated together the UAE space probe’s successful arrival at Mars and wondered about future Israeli-Emirati space co-operation and missions.

We write this article together, proud that the UAE and Israel are leading the world in vaccinating our populations against Covid-19. With open and direct ties, our medical professionals are sharing data, learning from one another and charting new areas for research and for collaboration on vaccine distribution around the region and world.

As we move toward reopening our economies and restarting travel, UAE-Israeli cross-border trade, tourism and investment growth will quicken. As the two most dynamic and advanced societies in the region, the potential is limitless.

On Monday, Ambassador Al Khaja will enter the official residence of Israeli President Reuben Rivlin to present his diplomatic credentials. Meetings will follow with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi. Work will start on locating a site for a new embassy. For Head of Mission Na’eh, now entering his second month of work in the UAE, the days are already filled with official government meetings and direct engagement with Emiratis.
Six months ago, it would have been hard to imagine. But here we are, each of us and together, supported by and in the interests of the governments and people we serve. We are helping to write a new chapter in diplomacy and chart a new course of peace, prosperity and progress for the Middle East.

*Mohamed Mahmoud Fateh Ali Al Khaja is the UAE Ambassador to the State of Israel.*

*Eitan Na’eh is Head of Mission at the Embassy of Israel in Abu Dhabi.*