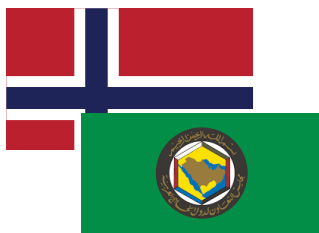




Gulf Research Center
Knowledge for All

Norway - GCC Relations





1. Key Domestic Developments

Norway is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of governance. King Harald V serves as the ceremonial head of state, having ascended the throne in 1991. Executive power resides with the government led by the Prime Minister, currently Jonas Gahr Støre of the Labour Party. Støre assumed office in October 2021 after forming a centre-left coalition government with the Centre Party. His administration has prioritized climate policy, energy security, and equitable economic development.

In January 2025, Norway's Eurosceptic Centre Party quit the government in a dispute over the adoption of European Union energy policies, leaving the centre-left Labour Party to rule alone eight months before the elections. The appointment of former NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg as Norway's new finance minister in February 2025 brought stability and experience to the Støre government. The next parliamentary election is scheduled for September 8, 2025, with the current Labour seats at 48, the Conservatives at 36, the Centre at 28, and the Progress at 21. Polls suggest shifting sentiments amid debates over energy policy.

Norway is not a member of the European Union but maintains a close relationship through the European Economic Area (EEA) and the Schengen Agreement. The country remains a major global energy exporter, particularly of natural gas and oil. At the same time, Norway has made substantial investments in renewable energy and aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. Domestically, Norway is characterized by strong institutions, low corruption, and high standards of living. The government has continued to navigate challenges related to immigration, economic diversification, and rural development. Norges Bank has maintained a cautious monetary stance to strike a balance between growth and inflation.

Key Norwegian Economic and Social Data

- GDP: 485.3 billion USD (2023)
- GDP per capita: 87,925.09 USD (2023)
- Annual Growth Rate: 0.5% annual change (2023)
- Inflation: 3.6% (February 2025)
- Population: 5.52 million (2023)
- Unemployment Rate: 4.3% (April 2025)
- Credit Rating: Standard & Poor's credit rating for Norway stands at AAA with stable outlook. Moody's credit rating for Norway was last set at Aaa with stable outlook. DBRS' credit rating for Norway was last reported at AAA with stable outlook.

2. Norway's Foreign Policy

Norway's foreign policy is anchored in multilateralism, international law, sustainable development, and peace diplomacy. As a member of NATO and a strong supporter of the United Nations, Norway contributes extensively to international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. Its longstanding focus on conflict mediation and dialogue remains central to its international identity. Norway is also part of the Nordic region, which comprises the five sovereign states, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, as well as the three autonomous territories associated with these states: the Faroe Islands, Greenland (part of Denmark), and Åland (part of Finland). The Nordic Council, established in 1952, serves as the forum for cooperation among parliamentarians, while the Nordic Council of Ministers, established in 1971, functions as the governmental forum. In the Nordic Council of Ministers (NORDEN), the presidency lasts one year and rotates between the five Nordic countries. Norway is also a key player in Arctic affairs and environmental diplomacy. It actively supports climate initiatives and environmental sustainability, aligning with its broader green transition goals.



Key Foreign Policy Initiatives

- Norway has played a mediating role in several global conflicts, including efforts in the Middle East and Africa.
- Norway also contributes approximately 1% of its Gross National Income (GNI) to Official Development Assistance (ODA), among the highest globally.
- Norway has continued to strengthen its defense cooperation within NATO, particularly following regional security developments since 2022.
- On May 28, 2024, Norway officially recognized the State of Palestine.
- Norway announced the Nansen Programme for Ukraine, a Norwegian support program for both civilian and military aid, with a total budget of NOK 205 billion (approximately USD 20 billion) for the period 2023–2030. In December 2024, both the budget and the duration were extended, and in March 2025, the budget was further increased by NOK 50 billion (approximately USD 5 billion).

3. Norway-GCC Fact Sheet

- Norway's Trade with the GCC, 2023

Country	Exports	Imports	Total Trade
Bahrain	\$15.1M	\$34.9M	\$50M
Kuwait	\$41.8M	\$88M	\$129.8M
Oman	\$13.2M	\$71.5M	\$84.7M
Qatar	\$189M	\$11.1M	\$200.1M
Saudi Arabia	\$307M	\$25M	\$332M
United Arab Emirates	\$427M	\$270M	\$697M
Total	\$993.1M	\$500.5M	\$1.4936B

Source: The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC)

Establishment of Diplomatic Relationships

- Norway maintains diplomatic relations with all six GCC member states. While Oslo serves as the hub for several Gulf embassies, Norway has embassies in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (accredited to Bahrain, Oman, and Yemen), as well as in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (accredited to Qatar and Kuwait).

Key Research Centers and Think Tanks

- Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) – <https://www.nupi.no/>
- Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI) – <https://www.cmi.no/>
- Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) – <https://www.prio.org/>
- NOREF Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution – <https://www.noref.no/>

Selected Key Regional Experts

- Jakub Godzimirski, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)
- Tine Gade, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)
- Kari Osland, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)
- Sverre Lodgaard, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)

4. Key Developments in Norway-GCC Relations

Relations between Norway and the GCC countries are poised for an era of growth and cooperation. In recent years, Norway has shown a growing interest in the Gulf states, recognizing the potential for increased collaboration with the region. This potential was underscored in a statement made in May 2022 by Norway's then Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Anniken Huitfeldt, where she stated that “The Middle East and North Africa region is part of our broader neighborhood. Not just in geographical terms...” and that the region is a crucial component of Norway's foreign policy.

As political dialogue between the two sides increases, security and defense cooperation between the GCC and Norway also represents a significant aspect of their evolving relationship, driven by shared concerns about regional stability and global security challenges. H.E. Huitfeldt stated that for Norway, “the focus is therefore on facilitating political dialogue between countries or between the authorities and non-state armed actors,” with three conflicts as a priority: Yemen, Syria, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

One of the most notable developments in this regard is Norway’s proactive involvement in the Palestinian issue. On May 26, 2024, Saudi Arabia and Norway jointly hosted a meeting in Brussels on a coordinated approach to the recognition of Palestine, ending the war in Gaza, and taking the necessary steps to implement a two-state solution. Two days later, Norway, alongside Spain and Ireland, formally recognized a Palestinian state in a coordinated effort by the three Western European nations to add international pressure on Israel to “soften its devastating response to last year’s Hamas-led attack.” Norwegian Foreign Minister H.E. Espen Barth Eide said in a statement that “for more than 30 years, Norway has been one of the strongest advocates for a Palestinian state. Today, when Norway officially recognizes Palestine as a state, is a milestone in the relationship between Norway and Palestine.”

The energy sector has been a cornerstone of GCC-Norway relations, with Norway sharing expertise with Gulf countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Oman, regarding renewable energy and the shift away from a heavy reliance on oil. Norway’s experience and leadership in the field of renewable energy, particularly in the areas of hydropower and wind energy, have presented opportunities for collaboration with the GCC countries as they seek to enhance their own capabilities in the energy industry and reduce their dependence on fossil fuels. Moreover, the launch of the Gulf states’ various national vision programs has provided new growth areas for Norwegian companies in the IT and green technologies sectors.



Economic relations are also an important aspect of the GCC-Norway partnership, with both parties recognizing the mutual benefits of trade and investment. Norway has been a trading partner for the GCC, and there has been a steady increase in the trade balance in recent years. Furthermore, Norwegian companies have been involved in various infrastructure and development projects in the GCC region, contributing to the economic growth and diversification of the Gulf economies.

GCC-Norway Relations:

- H.E. Jasem Albudaiwi, Secretary-General of the GCC, met on November 18, 2024, with H.E. Kjersti Tromsdal, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The meeting discussed mechanisms for joint cooperation, including the implementation of the February 2022 MoU and the Free Trade Agreement signed in June 2009, which entered into force on July 1, 2015. This agreement encompasses trade in goods and services, investment, and technical collaboration.
- In September 2024, the first joint ministerial meeting between the GCC states and Northern European countries was held on the sidelines of the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. H.E. Jasem Albudaiwi, Secretary-General of the GCC, emphasized the importance of the discussions, stating, “This meeting establishes a regular and open platform for discussing political, security, economic, and cultural issues of mutual interest, marking an



important step toward enhancing coordination and cooperation between both sides in various fields.” The Secretary-General also highlighted the “escalating tensions resulting from the stalled peace process, the Israeli war on Gaza, the deteriorating situation in the West Bank and Lebanon, and disturbances in the Red Sea, in addition to threats posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles,” and emphasized that “these challenges pose a significant risk to security and peace, not only in the region but globally, calling on like-minded countries to unite efforts to confront them through respect for international law and humanitarian principles.”



Bahrain-Norway Relations:

- In December 2024, HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Bahrain’s Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and Prime Minister, met with H.E. Espen Barth Eide, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway, on the sidelines of the IISS Manama Dialogue. HRH reaffirmed Bahrain’s commitment

to enhancing bilateral relations with the Kingdom of Norway, emphasizing the importance of continued dialogue and cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The Norwegian Foreign Minister also met with his Bahraini counterpart, H.E. Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani. The meeting centered on advancing bilateral cooperation in regional security, diplomatic coordination, and shared interests in strategic stability.

Oman-Norway Relations:

- In January 2024, Oman and Norway held the third round of political consultations in Muscat. Oman was represented by H.E. Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, while H.E. Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik, State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed the Norwegian side. Discussions covered bilateral cooperation and regional issues, including the repercussions of Israel’s war on Gaza.

Qatar-Norway Relations:

- In June 2025, on the margins of the Oslo Forum for Peace, Qatar’s Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh Al Khulaifi, met with his Norwegian counterpart, H.E. Espen Barth Eide, to review bilateral cooperation and discuss regional and international issues. The two officials previously met in December 2024 on the sidelines of the 2024 Doha Forum.
- In March 2025, H.E. Maryam bint Ali Al Misnad, Qatar’s Minister of State for International Cooperation, met with H.E. Andreas Kravik, Norway’s Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. The meeting underscored continuity in bilateral dialogue on humanitarian assistance and issues of mutual interests. The two officials previously met in February 2025 on the sidelines of a session of the Human Rights Council.



- In January 2025, H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, met with H.E. Espen Barth Eide, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum 2025 meetings in Davos, Switzerland. The two officials previously met in December 2024 on the sidelines of the 2024 Doha Forum.
- In October 2024, H.E. Lolwah bint Rashid Al Khater, Minister of State for International Cooperation, met with Norway's Foreign Minister, reaffirming commitments to coordinated humanitarian initiatives and exploring collaborative frameworks to tackle global crises effectively, including the latest developments in Gaza and Lebanon.
- In September 2024, H.E. Lolwah bint Rashid Al Khater, Minister of State for International Cooperation, met with H.E. Andreas Kravik, Norway's State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The two officials discussed developments in Gaza, Palestine, Afghanistan, and the Russian-Ukraine conflict.
- In September 2024, H.H. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, paid an official visit to Norway, where he met with various Norwegian officials, including Prime Minister H.E. Jonas Gahr Støre.

Saudi Arabia-Norway Relations:

- In September 2024, Saudi Arabia announced the launch of the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution at the 79th session of the UN General Assembly on September 26, 2024, in New York. Saudi Arabia and Norway hosted the second meeting in Brussels, and Norway hosted the third meeting in January 2025 in Oslo. The Oslo meeting underscored the urgent and critical need to advance Palestinian statehood and strengthen Palestinian institutions.

- Saudi Arabia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.H. Prince Faisal bin Farhan, met with Norway's Prime Minister, H.E. Jonas Gahr Støre, on the sidelines of the Summit on Peace in Ukraine, held in Lucerne, Switzerland, in June 2024, where they discussed "means of developing relations between Saudi Arabia and Norway, as well as regional and international developments and efforts to address them."

United Arab Emirates-Norway Relations:

- In October 2024, H.H. Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, concluded his official visit to Norway. The Crown Prince met with HRH Haakon Magnus, Crown Prince of Norway, and H.E. Jonas Gahr Støre, the Prime Minister of Norway, to discuss ways to strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries, expand cooperation, and establish strategic partnerships across key sectors. The UAE Ministry of Investment hosted the UAE-Norway Investment Forum in Oslo, coinciding with H.H. Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's official visit to Norway. The forum convened senior government officials, investors, and business leaders from both nations (including Equinor, Yara, Aker ASA, ADNOC, Masdar, and AD Ports) to highlight investment opportunities and UAE's business ecosystem incentives.
- In June 2024, H.E. Noura Al Kaabi, Minister of State for the UAE, participated in the Oslo Forum, an annual international platform co-hosted by Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, which convenes global mediators, diplomats, and peacebuilding experts.
- H.E. Reem bint Ebrahim Al Hashimy, UAE's Minister of State for International Cooperation, met with H.E. Espen Barth Eide, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway, in June 2024 to enhance "bilateral relations



as well as prospects of cooperation across various fields of mutual interest,” as well as the “ongoing developments in the Middle East, and the situation in the Gaza Strip and its consequences, particularly the humanitarian repercussions.”

- In April 2024, H.E. Abdulla Balalaa, UAE Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Energy and Sustainability Affairs, led a UAE delegation to Norway, accompanied by H.E. Fatima Al Mazrouei (UAE Ambassador in Oslo) and H.E. Olav Myklebust (Norwegian Ambassador in Abu Dhabi). Meetings were held by H.E. Andreas Bjelland Eriksen, Minister of Climate and Environment of Norway, to discuss the outcomes of COP28, renewable energy collaboration, climate research, and scientific exchange. H.E. Balalaa

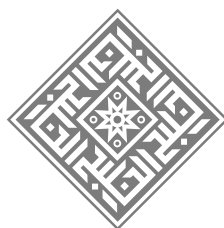
also met with H.E. Maria Varteressian, State Secretary for the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, and H.E. Hans Olaf Ibrek, Special Envoy for Climate and Security of Norway. The delegation also visited the Arctic University of Norway (Tromsø) and the Norwegian Polar Institute to explore Arctic sustainability initiatives.

5. Supporting Documents

GRC Commentary & Analysis

- GCC-NB8 Relations – [December 2024](#)
- GCC-Norway Relations – [June 2024](#)
- GCC-NB8 Relations – [July 2023](#)





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