



Image: Al-Rhama Mosque or Floating Mosque in Jeddah corniche, Saudi Arabia
Credits by: Maher Heimi on Unsplash.



Image: Promenade des Anglais in Nice, France
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Cooperation Beyond Borders: Jeddah and Nice Unite for Coastal Resilience



The true measure of a successful city dialogue lies beyond the conversation itself, but it is rather found in the actions it sparks and the lasting partnerships it creates. Therefore, the importance of such dialogues lies in their ability to generate knowledge and unlock future opportunities between participating cities. In fact, this concept serves as the core foundation driving the Arab European Cities Dialogue (AECD), initiated by the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI). The AECD continues its pursuit to actively pave the way for long-term, cross-border partnerships, aiming to facilitate a robust network of collaborations and exchanges. This vision was recently realized through a fruitful example that sparked within the AECD between the two participating cities: Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and Nice, France. The discussions held within the conference halls of Riyadh during

AECD 2025 blossomed into high-level cooperation between these two coastal cities, which later on was actualized on the global stage in Nice.

Planting the Seeds of Cooperation

The dialogue between the two cities originated in May 2025 during the AECD event in Riyadh. There, a delegation from Nice, led by Deputy Mayor Agnes Rampal, met with the leadership of the Jeddah Municipality, represented by Mayor H.E. Saleh Al-Turki, to discuss their shared urban priorities. It was clear that despite the geographical distance between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, the two cities shared a profound strategic alignment and prioritizing of the development of waterfronts (Jeddah, anchored by the Jeddah Islamic Port, serves as the Kingdom's primary commercial gateway, and Nice is centered around the historic



Port Lympia, a crucial hub for regional maritime connectivity). Following this initial exchange, the Mayor of Nice, Christian Estrosi, formally invited Mayor Al-Turki to join a global gathering of coastal leaders at the «Ocean Rise & Coastal Resilience Summit.» The summit was a special event held in France as part of the 2025 UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3).

The Jeddah-Nice Exchange

On June 2025 ,7, a high-level technical delegation from the Jeddah Municipality arrived in Nice, which included the Secretary's Advisor for Urban Planning, the Undersecretary for Coastal Monitoring and Protection, and the Assistant Secretary for Strategic Planning. The delegation used the summit to deepen its engagement in coastal resilience and international networking. It participated actively in multiple events, including a pre-summit dinner, three technical sessions, and high-level meetings with participating cities and international organizations.

The exchanges between the two cities opened with an official invitation extended to the Jeddah delegation, led by the Advisor to the mayor of Jeddah for Strategic Planning, to attend an exclusive dinner reception hosted by Mayor Christian Estrosi, alongside a number of distinguished dignitaries, city mayors, and international representatives participating in the summit. The side dialogues during this inaugural event were instrumental, facilitating the Jeddah delegation's engagement with city mayors and international experts, and discuss potentials for cooperation in climate adaptation, coastal management, and the exchange of best practices in sustainable urban planning. In many ways, these side engagements ultimately reflected the AECD's long-term aspiration to further position Arab cities within global networks, demonstrating the kind of knowledge exchange the initiative had originally set out to catalyze.



Within the «Ocean Rise & Coastal Resilience Summit,» the Jeddah delegation participated in three technical sessions aimed at deepening their technical exchanges and broadening their perspective on the summit theme, alongside networking with other participants. These technical exchanges positioned Jeddah as a proactive contributor to the global conversation on urban resilience and directly reflected Jeddah's own urban priorities,

in addition to their alignment with those of Nice. The first session was “Ports, Cities and Regions: United for Resilience”, which discussed the integration between port authorities and municipalities to enhance coastal protection. The second “Bold Visions for the Future of Coastal Cities and Regions”, which presented long-term urban adaptation plans from cities with pioneering experiences. Finally, “Multi-Level Governance for Coastal cities and Regions”, which focused on coordinating efforts between national and local authorities.

The events at the summit enabled the Jeddah Municipality to engage directly with the stories and priorities of other global cities. In this regard, this participation exposed the Jeddah Municipality to pioneering experiences from cities such as New Orleans, Rio de Janeiro, Cape Town, and Maputo, alongside advanced European and Asian experiences.

The delegation also utilized this global platform to arrange dedicated side meetings with NGOs as well, which was demonstrated in their meeting with the prominent French NGO Planète Urgence, which specializes in biodiversity. The Jeddah team headed by the Advisor to the mayor for Urban Planning met with Head of Relationship Development in Planète Urgence, to discuss enhancing the cooperation, and exchanging technical expertise in the restoration of coastal habitats. The meeting concluded with both parties agreeing to continue coordination through future technical meetings and potential joint environmental initiatives.



Reflecting on AECD General objectives:

This cooperation demonstrates that the AECD successfully paved the way for Jeddah and Nice to transform a conversation about ports into a regional communication platform, in which this journey that the two cities faced from a dialogue in Riyadh to a UN summit in Nice, and finally to a technical cooperation for mangrove restoration with NGOs showcases an example of what AECD seeks. It demonstrates that when city leaders are provided with the right platform to meet and discover their shared similarities, the results can extend far

beyond the duration of a single conference. Further benefiting both city management systems, and indirectly cities' relations among themselves.

Acknowledgement:

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About the Cities in Dialogue Series

Where Dialogue Becomes Action

The Cities in Dialogue series celebrates the real-world change sparked by the Arab European Cities Dialogue (AECD), an initiative led by the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI). What began as simple opportunities for cities to connect has grown into a vibrant network where collaboration fuels innovation. Each edition of the series follows the stories that unfold after the events - how conversations evolve into partnerships.



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