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## **3-day Gulf Environment Forum begins March 7**

By Fouzia Khan

JEDDAH – The Gulf Environment Forum (GEF), the first all-encompassing environmental event in the GCC region, will open here on March 7 under the patronage of Prince Turki Bin Nasser Bin Abdul Aziz, President of the Presidency of Meteorology and Environment.

The three-day forum has the full support of King Abdullah, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, Crown Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

GEF and the GCC union of chambers of commerce and industries will bring together major players in business and industry under the three key themes of exchange, develop and sustain. “The Gulf Environment Forum will gather many crucial industries under one roof, and this will be our chance to exchange ideas and discuss solutions for a cleaner and brighter future,” said Talaat Idriss, GEF Chairman.

Over \$100 billion has been forecasted for environmental investment over the next 10 years in the GCC, according to Alain Marhic, Event Director of BME Global, organizers of the forum.

“With companies such as GE Energy, Saudi Aramco and Dow Chemical spearheading green initiatives, the world’s biggest companies are now investing in one of the fastest growing markets in the world,” he said.

The Gulf Environment Forum takes place at a time of huge investment in the sector. The GCC region has signified its commitment to climate change, with \$25 billion to be invested in the solar and wind energy sectors alone, providing huge opportunities for major lucrative deals to be made, said Marhic.

He added that the level of support received, as well as the inclusion of influential speakers on the conference agenda, signals a genuine commitment to improving the environmental outlook for the entire GCC region.

The shift toward a sustainable future for the Gulf region is gathering momentum, with the Minister of Petroleum and Minerals Ali Al-Naimi stating recently that “the Kingdom aims to make solar power a major contributor to the energy supply in the next five to 10 years”.

The conference will provide an opportunity to discuss the the key issues this fast-moving market is facing. – SG