

Minutes of the meeting of OBFA Members held at the Anglo-Omani Society HQ, 32 Sackville St. London on Thursday 19 June 2014 at 10:15 am. Those present were:

Maqbool Ali Sultan (MAS) – OBFA Chairman – Oman

Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles (SC-C) – OBFA Chairman – UK

Shawqi A Sultan (SAS) – OBFA Secretary General

Khalil Khonji (KK) – Board Member

Sh. Ahmed Al Araithi (AA) – Board Member

Pankaj Khimji (PK) – Board Member

Sh. Aflah Ar Rawahy (AR) – Member

Sh. Yousef Y Al Harithy (YH) – Member

Murtadha H Ali (MHA) – Member

Hani M Al Zubair (HZ) – Member

Paul Sheridan (PS) – Member

Majid Al Toqi (MT) – Member

Mukhtar Hasan (MH) – Member

Apologies were received from Saleh Taleb Zakwani (Board Member), Rashad M Al Zubair (Member), Qais M Al Yousef (Member), Abdulredha M Sultan (Member)

MAS opened the meeting by thanking all those present (and those who had sent their apologies that morning) for traveling to London for the OBFA event. He then explained the following:

1. OBFA's registration process with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) was now complete and the Ministerial Decree has been published. SAS to circulate both Sayyed Badr Al Busaidi's letter to the Chairman and also the Decree. The Arabic and English version of the Articles of Association to be circulated as well.
2. MAS requested that a letter be written by SAS to all members advising them to pay the agreed subscription of RO 500 for the annual fee over a specified period of 3 month. Failure to pay would assume non-interest in OBFA membership. At present there are 50 members and the letters are to go to those 50.

3. MAS then reintroduced SC-C and spoke of OBFA's good fortune to have such a distinguished ex Diplomat as the UK Chair. He added that Ewan Stirling, HSBC's last CEO to Oman had agreed to provide support in the UK.
4. Though not much is known of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Oman, but by all accounts they do not appear to be very active. OBFA's concern, however, is the commercial and not the political aspect of the relationship between the two countries. AR wanted to know the names of the members of the All Party Group.
5. At SAS's request SC-C will write to Kate Hoey MP asking for the names of all those present at yesterday's meeting at Portcullis House with the All Party Group. MAS then gave a brief outline of the meeting that SAS and he had with Kate Hoey and Lord Balfe in December 2013 and then with the AOS in order to set up an Oman Day that unfortunately did not work out this time but hopefully would do so in future. It was suggested that an event takes place in September 2015 after the new parliament is elected. There should be two meetings per annum, a summer one in the UK and a winter one in Oman. It was agreed that OBFA will look at the possibility of a meeting in Oman in January/February 2015 and a possible late September 2015 one in the UK.
6. MAS then explained how the AOS got involved in the reception that was so successful yesterday and thanked AOS for organizing the event.
7. SC-C then explained that he had a talk with the past UK Chairman Martin Amison and also contact with the past Secretary General Ron Hollis. A brief discussion then ensued on the procedures and the methods to be used in order to attract UK members to OBFA. It was agreed that a Website (that already exists but need to be updated) could be used for global membership if OBFA so wishes. The Byelaws need to be looked at to see how to register members. A piped link should also be established so that members are in the know at any given moment in time as to what is happening within OBFA.

8. HRH The Duke of York has shown keen interest and wants to help OBFA. To that end he has requested SC-C to make an appointment to see him. The Duke has also said to both Chairmen that he would help Omani British companies in Joint Ventures and not restrict them to just the two countries but help them internationally. Both the Patrons have to be thanked formally for their stand.

9. OBFA should find sponsors like BP, Shell, HSBC etc. for the events in the UK. MAS said that at most it would cost around GBP 10k. SC-C to look how best to procure this and also into the possibility of opening a bank account in the name of OBFA in London. AR felt that OBFA should be seen as one legal entity both in the UK and Oman. MAS said that a full investigation into the legality of such an enterprise should take place and asked SC-C to assist.

10. A discussion on what sort of event should be given priority took place and after a great deal of debate it was agreed that focus should be on quality rather than quantity. MAS said that if we focused on say two subjects for example Tourism and Logistics then 20 companies in the UK from each sector should be invited with a more or less similar numbers from Oman and a meeting in the AOS (which can seat 80) takes place. By end July 2014 dates for 2015 should be fixed. SC-C will contact the Duke of York's office (Amanda Thirsk) and SAS Sayyed Haithem's for the dates. Members were invited to provide written suggestions on the type of event envisaged for Oman in the winter of 2015.

11. MAS informed the gathering that a Financial Conference is planned to take place in London under the aegis of the Central Bank of Oman and suggested OBFA attends it. It was generally felt that whenever an Omani sponsored economic conference takes place in the UK, OBFA should try to play a major role and be seen to be present. KK said that on all such occasions OBFA should be co-organisers if possible.

12. PS asked the question as to why weren't British Companies like the Water companies investing in Oman? Members were keen to have a full list of British companies and institutions established in Oman. It was agreed that SAS will arrange a meeting between those members interested and the British Business Group. It was also agreed to have the first Board Meeting sometime in July. SAS to liaise.

13. What should the total membership be? There were divided views with some wanting it to be restricted to the present 50, maybe increasing it to a little more and others who wanted it open ended. It was agreed that members will put their views in writing to SAS. All agreed that the criteria on who becomes a member must be absolutely transparent.

MAS and SC-C thanked all the members for their presence and contribution. There being no other business the meeting closed at 12:00 noon. With thanks to the Chairmen.