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INTERVIEW

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Oman's former ambassador to Italy and UN Security Council delegate (93-98')

Mr Al-Sinawi Al-Harthy served in Oman's mission to the UN before working in Oman's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Legal Division for 12 years, including 6 years as its head. He has served as Oman's ambassador to Italy for 7 years and has, additionally, acted as head of the MFA's legal department on Eastern Europe and South America.



Q. How have Oman's policies and international partnerships changed since the coronation of Haitham bin Tarik?

I think Oman's policies and international partnerships have not changed much (thus far) since the coronation of H.M Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for the goals and objectives of Oman foreign policy remain the same (for more details pls check mofa.gov.om). This is not to say that Oman's foreign policy is not open for change if it serves national interest as well as regional and international peace and security.

Q. What was the most challenging trial you faced as an Ambassador in Italy?

I can't think of any challenging moments during my tenure as Oman's ambassador to Italy, I had an excellent working relationship with the Farnezina as well as other public authorities in Rome which facilitated my mission there. On my watch, we managed to get a lot of work done (agreements signed + initiatives realized). Oman and Italy enjoy excellent bilateral relations, the late Sultan had a great deal of respect and admiration for Italian history, culture and traditions, so much so when he decided to build the first Opera house in the Middle East, he drew inspiration from La Scala, and the Arena di Verona. The inauguration performance, which I had the honor of attending, was orchestrated by none other than Franco Zeffirelli.

Q. What, would you say, was your most exciting professional experience?

My most exciting professional experience was when I served as a member of the Omani delegation to the United Nations in New York (1993-1998). Oman was one of the non-permanent members of the Security Council, it was an eye-opening experience for me and my colleagues. Those of us in the diplomatic service equate serving in U.N with a football player playing in the World Cup, so you can imagine how exciting it was.

Q. What sets Oman apart from other countries in the Middle East in terms of its diplomacy and foreign relations?

What is distinctive about Omani foreign policy is that it has no "hidden agenda". We stand on equal distance from different parties to regional and international disputes, and when we offer our good office, we do so in integrity and good faith, away from the media. Oman's role in hosting and facilitating the initial talks between Iran and the 5+1 powers which culminated in the signing of the Iran nuclear deal is just one example of this.

Q. Could you tell us about how Oman is currently handling the Covid-19 pandemic?

Since the characterization by the W.H.O of the coronavirus as a pandemic in March 2020, The Omani Government set up a supreme committee with a fast-track authority to make decisions related to coronavirus. The committee holds regular meetings to review the status of outbreaks in Oman and the world and takes appropriate actions. The committee strives to strike a balance between protecting public health and sustaining economic activities. The status of the pandemic in Oman is not so bad compared to other countries, still, Oman is taking the issue very seriously.

Q. Have you ever visited San Diego and what advice would you give to any Americans looking to visit Oman?

Unfortunately, I haven't had the opportunity to visit San Diego, however when I was a student in the University of Wales (U.K) I had an American friend from San Diego, he was very passionate about and proud of his state and city. My advice to any American who wishes to visit Oman is to come in the winter (December - March) because the weather during this period is very comfortable. I would also advise them to take the time to visit the desert, the mountains, and do some adventure tourism which a lot of Europeans come to Oman for.