

**An *IFC Reports* Interview with
Her Excellency Mrs. Deborah K. Jones,
American Ambassador to Kuwait**

**On the
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For our special report on Kuwait



IFC REPORTS: How important is the U.S.' presence here in Kuwait and what opportunities are available for American companies considering the development plan and everything else we have just been discussing?

MS. DEBORAH K. JONES: The U.S. and Kuwait enjoy perhaps one of the strongest strategic political and economic relationships the U.S. enjoys with any country in this part of the world. Most people think of it in terms of the Gulf War and the liberation in 1991, but in fact the strategic relationship goes back further than that – back to 1987 when we reflagged the Kuwaiti tankers during the Iraq-Iran war. The commercial relationship goes back even further than that – GM (General Motors) has been here for about 60 years partnering with Kuwait.

Prior to that, the first modern ruler of Kuwait, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah, invited the Reformed Church of America to open the first medical centre in Kuwait in 1911 and we are very proud of that long heritage. My goal as ambassador has been to strengthen our commercial and economic relationship to reflect the strength of our current security relationship, and also to grow it. As such, we are fortunate that Kuwait has announced its \$104 billion development plan to coincide with the President's National Export Initiative.

We hope to be partners and we hope to play a role as an Embassy in linking U.S. businesses and companies with Kuwaiti companies. We believe that we can be a great force multiplier for them and they can benefit from our expertise and technical know-how as well as the culture of American business, which goes well beyond the contract and the installation of things, extending to services and maintenance as well as a corporate culture of transparency. We think this is good commercially and economically, but it also helps to build civil society.

IFC REPORTS: Considering Kuwait's 2010-2014 approved development plan you just mentioned, where do you believe the majority of opportunities lie for American investors?

MS. DEBORAH K. JONES: We are already pretty dominant in the oil services field, and we think there is more room for growth. Obviously we would like to participate in major infrastructure projects that are going on, and we think we have a lot to offer in the medical field. Kuwaitis are already great customers for American medical services, which we believe are the best in the world right now, and we would like to continue to partner with them as they bring some of that medical capability to Kuwait.

We are also looking at energy because with the new development plan, we are looking at 6 to 7% projected electricity demand growth for the next 20 years. We are already here on the ground with GE and Sabiya, working on a \$2.4 billion project together with Hyundai. Beyond oil and gas, we think we have a lot to offer in terms of green technology and looking at environmental alternatives as Kuwait and the other GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries look at those opportunities as well.

IFC REPORTS: Coming close to the end of your term in Kuwait, what would you say is your greatest accomplishment?

MS. DEBORAH K. JONES: I think as a mission, we have been able to successfully advocate for American business and companies in a pretty competitive and challenging environment. I have tried to speak to Kuwait as a friend and a partner to work together with them and move in the direction where we believe is the best in terms of their own prosperity, security and stability.



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As an Ambassador, I have been juggling the security relationship we have (which is hugely important as Kuwait is an indispensable partner for our regional security operations) with balancing our civil society interests here in Kuwait. Kuwait has a rich heritage of open exchange and dialogue; it has a strong foundation with a good Constitution and a freely elected parliament. As I have been here, we have seen 4 women being elected to Parliament. And we are very proud of the fact that each one of them holds a PhD from an American institution.

I have worked hard to connect with Kuwaitis on all levels so that our mission understands what their hopes and aspirations are so that we can work together with our friends to help them achieve those ambitions. We rely heavily on our own experience as a developing democracy – I do believe that every democracy is a developing democracy. We try to offer a range of things that they can either look at or reject and learn from others’ experiences, with the full understanding that they are going to have to develop along their own path, in ways that make sense to them. I think we have been successful in a number of our advocacy roles here, and we are proud of that.

These are not my successes; these are the successes of the mission. I have a tremendous mission here of over 600 staff who work every day to support what we do here. Half of them are local staff and the other half are U.S. hired staff. I have been very fortunate. I often say that there is no better job in the world than being the U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait because of the relationship we have and the friendship we have. It has been a tremendous assignment.

IFC REPORTS: Your Excellency it has been an absolute pleasure, thank you very much.