

**U.S.-Bahrain
Free Trade Agreement
Coalition**



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**U.S.-Bahrain FTA Coalition Applauds Signing of
U.S.-Bahrain FTA
*Urges Swift Congressional Approval***

Washington, DC – The U.S.-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement Coalition today applauded the signing of the U.S.-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement and called on Congress to move swiftly to approve the trade pact this year. The FTA was signed at a White House ceremony by U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick and Bahrain's Minister of Finance and National Economy, Abdulla Hassan Saif.

“Swift Congressional passage of the U.S.-Bahrain FTA will send an important message to the Arab world that the United States is eager to work with its allies to increase mutually beneficial economic opportunities,” said Bill Reinsch, President of the National Foreign Trade Council.

Negotiations on the U.S.-Bahrain FTA began in May of 2003. Upon taking effect, the FTA will provide immediate duty-free access to 100% of bilateral trade in non-textiles industrial goods, 100% of Bahrain’s agricultural exports, 98% of U.S. agricultural exports, and includes an innovative annex on financial services.

“This is a model agreement with an indispensable ally of the United States. The U.S.-Bahrain FTA will open many doors to the entire Middle East region, increase economic opportunity in both countries, eliminate key trade barriers, and set a new standard for future high-level trade agreements throughout the region,” said Jeff Donald, Vice President, Business Council for International Understanding.

David Hamod, President of the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce added, “This agreement is a key building block in the President’s initiative to build a Middle East Free Trade Area and comes on the heels of a strong FTA with Morocco, signed this summer. We urge Congress to act quickly on the U.S.-Bahrain FTA.”

The U.S.-Bahrain FTA Coalition, organized through a secretariat comprised of the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU), the National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC), and the National

U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC), consists of nearly 60 companies, associations and organizations which support the negotiation and urge approval by Congress of this agreement with Bahrain, our long standing ally in the Arabian Gulf.

Bahrain has been a steadfast ally to the United States historically, and recently on the war on terrorism, and was designated by President Bush as a major non-NATO ally in October 2001. The U.S.-Bahrain FTA, and the broader Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) initiative, builds upon these long standing ties by ensuring closer economic and commercial relations, as well as a brighter economic future for those that share a desire for peace and greater prosperity.

The Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU), a U.S. business association founded in 1959 at White House initiative, is dedicated to promoting dialogue and action between the business and government communities for the purpose of expanding international commerce.

The National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC) is a leading business organization advocating an open, rules-based global trading system. Founded in 1914 by a broad-based group of American companies, the NFTC serves its several hundred member companies through its offices in Washington and New York.

The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) is a leading business association dedicated to promoting, supporting and strengthening American and Arab commercial relations. For over 35 years NUSACC continues to represent the private sectors of the US and the Arab world through its network of affiliations with chambers of commerce and industry throughout the Middle East North Africa region and its offices in New York, Houston, Los Angeles and Washington, DC.

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