

The history of the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad can be traced back to the summer of 1991 when a council was established under the title of "Experts' Affairs" in the I.R. Iran's mission at the UN (New York) and various ministries of Iran were informed of its existence. The Council was made the focal point for establishing contacts with Iranian expatriates. The "Experts' Affairs" was active under the supervision of the Foreign Ministry's Council of advisors and the Deputy for Training and Research from August 1994 to 1997 and from 1997 to 1999 respectively.

The lack of decision-making and the required coordination between the respective organs dealing with the affairs of the Iranians living abroad and the necessity of understanding the importance of utilizing the full capacities enjoyed by them and using them for developing the country, paved the ground for the emergence of a high council to guide and manage the issues and affairs. Hence, in the meeting held on, August 23, 2000 the Cabinet approved the plan for the establishment of the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad and entrusted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the task of handling its secretariat affairs. Ultimately, the plan, which had been proposed in the first place by the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was approved after the matter was raised and discussed in the political committee of the government in the meeting held on November 09, 2003 and as the result of the ratification No. 28798 ت/22355 dated November 25, 2003, invoking article 138 of the I.R. Iran's Constitution, it was decided that the President would head the High Council and the Foreign Minister would be its Secretary and the secretariat be based in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Based on the above-said ratification, the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad was officially established with the President himself as its head and the membership of 8 ministries (including: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, Ministry of Labor and

Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health, Treatment and Medical Education) and two other organizations (I.R. Broadcasting Organization, and the Center for Women and Family Affairs). In the same line, a Expediency Council extraordinary meeting convened on December 29, 2003 and looked into the general policies of the Fourth Development Plan of Iran and emphasized the need for strengthening the Islamic, Iranian and Persian Language identity of Iranians living abroad and the necessity of facilitating their contributions to their motherland.

In the first meeting of the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad which was chaired by the then president of Iran, the executive bylaws of the High Council was approved on February 23, 2000. According to the bylaws, the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad is made up of four specialized cooperation work groups: Legal and Consular, Scientific and Educational Cooperation, Cultural & Media, and Economic & Commercial. In the same meeting the four Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Science & Technology, Culture and Islamic Guidance and Economic Affairs & Finance were elected as the heads of the above-said work groups respectively. The members of every group work were appointed, too.

According to ratification No. 34934 ت/11028 made by the Cabinet on April 29, 2006, paragraph 2 of the previous ratification was amended and, consequently, the secretariat of the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad was moved to the Presidential Office.

The foremost duties of the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad:

- 1- Examine and approve the macro policies and programs in relation to Iranian expatriates.

- 2- Adopt the initiatives required for a more constructive interaction with Iranian expatriates.
- 3- Support the Iranian expatriates
- 4- Support the birthrights of Iranians in different fields including their social, and economic rights etc
- 5- Facilitate and strengthen the more effective presence of the Iranian expatriates on the social and economic scenes inside the country and the different areas of construction
- 6- Coordinate and optimize the executive policies of the different organs inside the country in to offer their services in a better more efficient way
- 7- Expedite and foster the bonds between the Iranians living outside and the ones living inside the country through proposing the necessary laws and approving the right regulations.

The secretariat the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad makes the needed arrangements and coordination between the work groups. It is also tasked with pursuing the issues and affairs related to connections between the Iranian expatriates and the official organizations inside the country, exploring the ways their technical, managerial, scientific potentials as well as their connections and assets might be utilized for the growth and development of their motherland. The secretariat also aims to expand relations with other countries.

Accordingly, the secretariat the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad receives the problems of the Iranians living abroad and refers them to the secretariat of the work groups. Relying upon their facilities and capacities and those of their members, these secretariats start looking into the problems and try to find ways to solve them and, later, design and propose the needed mechanisms. The outcomes

of the meetings of the work groups are raised in the sessions of the coordination council of the secretaries of work groups which are comprised of the President's representative to the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad, secretary of the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad and the secretaries of the four work groups as well as the deputy of the Justice Minister and, if approved, are then sent to the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad to be ratified.

It needs to be mentioned that the plan for the formation of a judicial work group to be headed by the Minister of Justice is now on the agenda of the upcoming meeting of the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad. That is why for the time being, the judicial issues and problems are taken care of by the Justice Ministry deputy for international affairs.

The members of the Economic & Commercial work group:

This work group is made of various ministries: the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, Central Bank and the Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines. Moreover, at the request of the secretary of the work group and upon the approval of the secretary of the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad, the Ministry of Industries and Mines, the Deputy of technology of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology as well as the deputy of Technology of the Presidential Office have joined the work group as its principal members.

The duties of the Economic & Commercial work group:

- 1- Attract the cooperation of the Iranians and Iranian elite and their capitals by adopting appropriate policies and solutions needed to obtain their support

for the exportation of Iran's products and technical and engineering services to world markets and finding ways to transfer the capitals of Iranian expatriates

- 2- Prepare and determine the agenda of the Economic & Commercial work group and manage its sessions
- 3- Study the areas of possible economic cooperation with Iranians living abroad in order to encourage them to make investments in Iran and facilitate the relevant processes
- 4- Disseminate information and establish contacts with the Iranian investors, industrialists and traders living abroad through the secretariat as well as the diplomatic missions of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- 5- Make arrangements for the Iranian expatriates to pay visits to the economic and development and industrial projects.
- 6- Study the ways other countries use to utilize the economic potential of their expatriates.
- 7- Contribute to the holding of economic seminars and gatherings inside or outside the country with the attendance of Iranian expatriates and make coordination with relevant organs.
- 8- Prepare the draft of the right projects to promote and expand the economic activities of the Iranian expatriates and refer them to the relevant organizations inside the country.
- 9- Cooperate with the Foreign Economic Relations Coordination Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, other economic organizations and the provincial headquarters for the promotion and protection of investments.
- 10- Identify the state and private sectors inside the country which are keen to enter into partnerships with the Iranian expatriates and establishing contacts between them.
- 11- Inform the Iranian expatriates of the economic and commercial seminars and gatherings in a timely manner.

- 12- Utilize the capabilities of Iranian expatriates to advance the economic programs of the country.
- 13- Disseminate information on the latest rules and regulations and directives pertaining to investment and participation of Iranian expatriates in economic affairs.
- 14- Help solve the customs-related problems of the Iranian expatriates within the rules and regulations and with the assistance of the relevant organs.
- 15- Convince Iranian expatriates to hold industrial and commercial exhibitions to introduce the capabilities of the industrial sectors of the country to other countries by making the Iranian expatriates active (in cooperation with the respective organizations).
- 16- Cooperate and coordinate with the member organs of the Council on the economic affairs of the Iranian expatriates.
- 17- Undertake all the affairs related to the secretariat of the High Council of Iranian Affairs Abroad within the framework of the duties of the work group.
- 18- Help solve the problems of Iranian expatriates in cooperation with the responsible organs and within the framework of the duties of the work group and the rules and regulations

The honorable Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance of I.R. Iran is the Head of the Economic & Commercial work group work group. The secretariat of the work group is based in the Organization for Investment, Economic & Technical Assistance of Iran (OIETAI).