



WHITE  
SQUARE

Everything.  
Everywhere.  
Just Perfect.

## AGREEMENTS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE COUNCIL OF GULF ARAB STATES (GCC): SOME ASPECTS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT WHEN CONDUCTING ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION

*16 February 2026*

This alert has been prepared to provide a brief overview of certain aspects of agreements within the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Gulf Cooperation Council ("**GCC**")), a regional intergovernmental organization comprising six Arab states in the Persian (Arabian) Gulf: the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman. Taking these agreements into account is critically important when actively conducting business in the region.

---

*This material is based on information from public sources and is for reference purposes only. It does not constitute advice or a legal opinion. If you have any questions regarding this alert, please contact us at: [info@whitesquarepartners.com](mailto:info@whitesquarepartners.com).*

## 1. General provisions

The GCC was established on May 25, 1981, with the aim of deepening integration and coordination, as well as strengthening economic, political, and military cooperation between member countries.

The main objectives of the GCC are enshrined in art. 4 of 1981 Charter of the GCC and include the harmonization of legislation and administrative systems, the development of science and technology, the implementation of joint economic and infrastructure projects, military cooperation, support for the private sector, and the development of cultural, social, and humanitarian ties between member states.

Integration within the GCC is gradual and is carried out while preserving the national sovereignty of the states.

## 2. Key mechanisms of integration within the GCC

### 1) GCC Customs Union

One of the key practical elements of integration is the GCC Customs Union, which has been in operation since 2003. It provides for a single external customs tariff for goods imported from third countries, as well as the absence of customs duties and quantitative restrictions in mutual trade between member states. Goods that have cleared customs in one GCC country can move freely throughout the territory of other union countries without re-clearing customs, which greatly simplifies cross-border trade and regional supply chains.

### 2) Freedom of movement for citizens and passport preferences

Citizens of GCC countries have the right to freely enter, reside, and work in other countries of the union without visa requirements. As a rule, a national passport or identity card is sufficient to cross borders. The GCC also enshrines the principle of equal

access for citizens to the labor market and economic activity in other countries of the union, taking into account the requirements of national legislation, which effectively creates a single labor mobility area (i.e., for the company incorporation / bank account opening in other GCC countries citizen of a GCC country may as a general rule use his own country's national documents).

### 3) Framework regulation and institutional model

The legal basis of the GCC is a framework model of integration that does not involve the creation of supranational bodies with direct regulatory influence. Decisions are made by consensus and are subject to implementation through national legal systems. This approach ensures flexibility in integration, but at the same time leads to differences in the pace and depth of implementation of agreements between member states, including economic and regulatory convergence.

### 4) Riyadh Convention on Judicial Cooperation

At the level of the GCC (along with other Arab states <sup>1</sup>), the Riyadh Arab Agreement for Judicial Cooperation dated 1983 regulates issues of legal assistance and cross-border enforcement of judicial acts.

Its key provisions are as follows:

- judgments rendered in one signatory state are subject to recognition and enforcement in other states of the union;
- reconsideration of the merits of the case is not permitted;
- refusal of recognition is possible only on limited grounds (procedural violations, conflict with public policy).

---

<sup>1</sup> Other signatories include Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Comoros, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen.

For businesses, this means greater predictability in dispute resolution and reduced legal risks in cross-border activities within the GCC.

#### 5) 1996 GCC Convention on the Enforcement of Judgments and Court Orders

The 1996 GCC Convention for the Execution of Judgments, Delegations, and Judicial Notifications has a special significance in the legal architecture of the GCC.

This document establishes a simplified and formalized mechanism for the mutual recognition and enforcement of judgments, as well as the service of judicial and procedural documents between GCC member states. The Convention aims to eliminate duplicate procedures, reduce procedural barriers, and prevent the re-examination of the merits of a dispute, while maintaining limited grounds for refusal related, in particular, to public policy and procedural violations.

In practical terms, the Convention strengthens the connectivity of the judicial systems of the GCC states and improves the effectiveness of cross-border law enforcement, which is essential for commercial disputes and the enforcement of obligations within the union.

### 3. Conclusion

The Gulf Cooperation Council is a strategically important association of countries with growing economic potential that are actively modernizing their business environments. Although each country retains its own legal specifics and case law, taking into account supranational agreements within the GCC will make it possible to structure relations more effectively and protect rights when doing business in the region.



**Dmitry Zyuzin**

Team leader | UAE law



**Darya Grishunina**

Corporate Services Specialist

---

**Dubai**  
Anantara  
Business Bay

**Moscow**  
20/7 Chaplygina street  
Chaplygin House

**Hong Kong**  
Central Plaza, Office 1904  
18 Harbour Road, Wan Chai

[info@whitesquarepartners.com](mailto:info@whitesquarepartners.com)  
[whitesquarepartners.com](http://whitesquarepartners.com)

