Dear Mr Dahllöf,

Subject: Your request for access to documents – 2015/58

Thank you for your request for access to documents dated 23 March, 2015, registered the same day in our access to documents register under the reference 2015/58.

We have examined your request in the framework of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (hereafter the "Regulation"), which is applicable to the EEAS pursuant to Article 11(1) of Council Decision 2010/427/UE of 26 July 2010 establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service.

We understand that you request public access to documents which contain the following information: Communication between the EEAS and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since January 2015 regarding different areas of cooperation and/or exchange of views between the two entities.

We have identified the following documents matching your request:

1. Letter of condolences to Prince Saud Al-Faisal on the passing of King Abdullah, dated 23/01/2015
2. Letter of condolences to Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz on the passing of King Abdullah, dated 23/01/2015
3. Letter of apologies on cancellation of meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh to Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz, dated 18/03/2015
4. Note Verbale from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Mission to the EU, ref. 6/5/1/157811 of 18/3/2015 on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s bid for UNHRC membership
5. Note Verbale from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Mission to the EU, ref. 874 of 13/3/2015 on Yemen
Documents 1, 2 and 3 are letters of the High Representative Vice President of the European Commission and after consultation of our services, access can be given to you, which you will find attached.

Concerning documents 4 and 5 we regret to inform you that these documents are covered by one of the exceptions provided for by Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 and that they cannot be made available to you. The exception which applies to these documents relates to the protection of the public interest as regards international relations under Article 4 (1) (a) third indent of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

The Saudi authorities have been consulted. They let us know that Kingdom of Saudi Arabia does not agree with the disclosure of the correspondence as it would undermine the protection of its public interest as regards international relations.

The fact that the consulted third party is the Government of a third country is of particular relevance in the context of the protection of international relations.

The documents under question include sensitive content which is linked to the international relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the EU.

Partial access to the requested documents was examined and deemed impossible as the sensitive elements are integral to them.

Should you wish this position to be reviewed you may write to the EEAS at the address below, confirming your initial request. You have fifteen working days in which to do so from receipt of this letter, after which your initial request will be deemed to have been satisfied.

The EEAS would inform you of the result of this review within fifteen working days from the registration of your request, either granting you access to the documents or confirming the refusal. In the latter case, you would be informed of how you can take further action.

All correspondence should be sent to the following address:

The European External Action Service
EEAS, Office PARC 01/278
B- 1046 Brussels
access-to-documents@eeas.europa.eu

Yours sincerely,

Claude Maerten