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## Syria is determined to cope with challenges facing its economy

*H.E. Dr. Hussain Omran, Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Federal Republic of Germany, spoke with Helene Rang, CEO, German Near and Middle East Association (Nah- und Mittelost-Verein e.V.)*

*H.R.: In June 2004 Syria and the Gulf Cooperation Council signed minutes of a free trade agreement. A further agreement on political and economic cooperation was signed in November 2004 with the European Union. What are the perspectives of establishing a large Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Zone in connection with the Arab Peninsula?*



*H.E. Dr. Hussain Omran, Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Federal Republic of Germany*

*H.E. Dr. Hussain Omran:* One of the most important paragraphs in the Syrian-European agreement emphasizes the "deep historic, geographic, and cultural relations between Syria and Europe". Furthermore, Syria is politically of vital importance for the Arab Peninsula and

the Gulf region.

The political importance of Syria will become more visible after the return of peace and security to Iraq; as we are very optimistic regarding our role as mediator between East and West, between Europe and Syria and the Arab region it is strategically embedded in. This mediation will not be restricted to

economic issues only, but will comprise political and cultural aspects as well.

Therefore Syria hopes for a stronger European role in the region, especially in favour of a political settlement [for the Middle East], of peace, and other factors essential for stability and economic growth.

*continued on page 4*