On Thursday 9 March, the British Embassy hosted the closing ceremony of the Young Ambassador Programme. The four-month-long initiative, a collaboration between the British and Canadian Embassies, and the United Nations in the state of Kuwait, partnered a mix of public and private secondary school students with a range of diplomatic missions and organisations in Kuwait.

Through various events, including: a call on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Diplomatic Institute; engaging with the Environment Public Authority on Kuwait’s biodiversity; a drama workshop; networking events with visiting senior officials; a tour of a military base; and a mock crisis exercise, in addition to opportunities to shadow the day-to-day work of the respective diplomatic organisations they partnered with, the students were exposed to key elements of diplomacy and built skills to become advocates and leaders in their communities.

A key theme throughout the programme was gender equality and how to combat gender-based violence, with the Young Ambassadors meeting a range of relevant civil society organisations and academics to both learn about, and provide their own ideas on, how to create a more equal world in which everyone has the opportunity to fully contribute their ideas and fulfil their potential. The programme was launched on the International Day of the Girl, and the closing ceremony itself was timed to coincide with the week of International Women’s Day.

In total, 24 diplomatic organisations took part in the programme, with 30 students receiving certificates recognizing their active participation. In addition to the diplomatic organisations, students and their schools, the programme owes its success to its partners the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, a range of academic, civil society partners, Ms. Dima Al-Ansari, and Shell.

British Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Her Excellency Belinda Lewis:

*The Young Ambassadors initiative has delivered so many positive outcomes. The activities have helped to build the confidence and broaden the experience of the young people involved, and I hope this will be useful when the participants come to think about career choices and different ways to serve their communities. I also hope the engagement with lots of diverse role models will encourage the young people to focus on talent and aspiration, regardless of gender, age, background or any other factors.*

Canadian Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Her Excellency Aliya Mawani:

*It has been wonderful to get to know the Young Ambassadors and watch these already talented students develop their leadership and advocacy skills through the programme. I have learned much from my interactions with this group and been so impressed by the manner in which they have embraced the unknown during this experience. I look forward to seeing where their journeys take them. I am confident that they will be excellent champions for gender equality and that their efforts will contribute to a better world for us all. The future is bright!*

Dr Assad Hafeez, United Nations Resident Coordinator a.i:

*The United Nations in the State of Kuwait had the pleasure of collaborating with the British and Canadian Embassies on this programme, aiming to support the Young Ambassadors in familiarising themselves with leadership skills and the art of diplomacy, and becoming confident and effective champions of gender equality and a world where each of us, regardless of who we are of what we look like, has an equal opportunity to contribute and fulfil our potential. This experience was a unique opportunity to work with and learn from these talented young individuals, and hear their ideas about how to promote gender equality and tackle gender-based violence. This program is by all means a great example of multilateral collaboration of the International community working towards a common strategic objective and priorities.*