



MENA-OECD BUSINESS ADVISORY BOARD

COVID-19 Pandemic Crisis Response Webinar

AGENDA

14 May 2020, Virtual



COVID-19 CRISIS RESPONSE WEBINAR



TACKLING CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19):
CONTRIBUTING TO A GLOBAL EFFORT



CONTEXT

The COVID-19 pandemic is not only a health crisis but likewise threatens the jobs and livelihoods of people around the world. The business community, and particularly SMEs and the self-employed, are in the front-line. Especially in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, businesses are massively affected by the crisis.

Throughout the region, measures of confinement and social distancing have resulted in temporary business closure. Due to disruptions of global supply chains, companies that are still operating face difficulties to receive input material to sustain their production. Logistical and transport problems reduce storage, retail and trade capabilities, limiting access to domestic, regional and international markets. In Tunisia, for instance, the crisis unsettled the schedule of commercial vessels, making the trade of goods increasingly volatile and difficult to plan. In the West Bank and in Gaza, hundred thousand of workers are unable to cross borders to reach their employment.

Countries in the region have implemented different responses to support the business community throughout the crisis. Central banks have increased liquidity and eased lending conditions to companies. Many governments have set up support funds, lifted tax burdens and reduced prices for gas and electricity. Furthermore, where it is possible, governments have supported the transition to remote work.

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the critical role and social responsibility of the private sector in supporting responses to the crisis. For instance, in Tunisia, the government coordinates closely with the private sector through strong business associations. In many MENA economies, businesses continue salary payments and social security contributions for their employees throughout the crisis. Moreover, companies have adjusted their production to support the supply of protective clothing, face masks or hydro-alcoholic gels. Others offer specific support to the health sector where governments struggle to do so, also using digital infrastructure and new technologies. In co-operation with the Ministry of Health, a Libyan startup is currently developing an online platform where doctors in diaspora can treat patients in the country. In Lebanon, a group of entrepreneurs has supported the development of free testing capacities for the population.

In this context, it is even more important for the MENA business community to share their concerns and exchange experience about possible solutions. What are innovative solutions that businesses can

The MENA-OECD Business Advisory Board (BAB)

Founded in 2017, the MENA-OECD Business Advisory Board (BAB) aims to provide a structured, sustainable and well-informed platform for private sector mobilisation in the region. Through its activities, the BAB creates reform coalitions between governments and the business community to inform regional policy dialogue and promote new forms of Public-Private Dialogue in the region.

The BAB is co-chaired by the Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organisation (CEOE) and the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA).

[Website](#)

implement? What is the social responsibility of companies in times of crisis (e.g. support to the health sector)? To address these questions, the MENA-OECD Business Advisory Board is organising a roundtable webinar, allowing its members to share their views, concerns and solutions.

14 May 2020	
14:45-15:00	Online Check-in
15:00-15:10	Opening remarks
	Mr. Carlos CONDE , Head of Division, Middle East and Africa, Global Relations Secretariat, OECD
15:10-15:40	Session 1: Strategic responses and public private dialogue to tackle the crisis
Moderator:	<p>Ms. Marta BLANCO, President, Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organisation (CEOE)</p> <p>Mr. Hichem ELLOUMI, Vice President, Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA)</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic has required close interaction between governments and businesses to design effective policy responses. In this crisis situation, coordination and coherence of public-private dialogue is particularly important. This session will allow the co-chairs of the MENA-OECD Business Advisory Board to share good practices and discuss ways to scale up co-operation between the public and the private sector. Given the important impact on the tourism industry in the Mediterranean region, this session will pay special attention to the needs of this sector.</p>
15:40-16:10	Session 2: Innovative responses by business to the pandemic
Moderator:	<p>Mr. Fouad Zmokhol, President, Association of Lebanese Business People in the World (RDCL World)</p> <p>Governments in the region have implemented different responses to support the business community throughout the crisis. In addition, companies themselves have developed innovative solutions to tackle the negative impact of the pandemic on their activities. This roundtable discussion encourages participants to share best practices and innovative solutions across the region and beyond.</p>
16:10-16:50	Session 3: The role of companies to further social cohesion
Moderator:	<p>Mr. El Sayed TORKY, Senior Advisor, Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI)</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the critical role of the private sector in supporting responses to the crisis, particularly the socio-economic aspects. In many instances, the business community offers critical assistance to governments to mitigate social and economic impacts. For instance, companies throughout the region continue to pay salaries and social security contributions during the crisis. Participants in this session will share examples and cases of good corporate practices with enhanced social responsibility to tackle the pandemic.</p>
16:50-17:00	Closing and summary of discussions
	Ms. Fianna JURDANT , Senior Advisor, Middle East and Africa Division, Global Relations Secretariat, OECD