

OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum Annual Meeting

and

Conference on Fostering Youth and Women's Employment in the MENA Region

Agenda

21 November 2012

OECD Conference Centre – Room 2
2 rue André Pascal, Paris 75016, France

This meeting of the OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum (WBF) will begin with a session dedicated to discussing future priorities and activities to support women's enterprise development in the MENA region.

The afternoon session will discuss public and private sector actions to boost jobs and skills for youth and women in the MENA region.

The event's conclusions (comprising both sessions) will be presented to the Steering Group of the MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development, during its meeting on 22 November 2012.

A cocktail reception hosted by the Women's Business Forum will be served at 6.30 pm in the Roger Ockrent Room of the OECD Château de la Muette.

Background and objectives

As Middle East and North African (MENA) countries undergo unprecedented political and economic change, governments are faced with a number of economic challenges. High unemployment rates persist, especially among the youth, women and the educated. New firm creation rates are not sufficient to create jobs for the region's growing labour force. Lack of financing, business support and infrastructure limit new firms' ability to grow and compete on the global marketplace.

This conference of the OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum (WBF) will discuss means to address some of these challenges. The morning session will focus on future activities of the WBF, taking into account the impact of the current economic and political context. Participants will notably discuss potential future projects to monitor and improve knowledge on women's access to financing and business development services. Participants will also discuss next steps for further developing synergies and building partnerships with local, regional and international organisations working on women's economic empowerment. The afternoon session will discuss public and private sector actions to promote employment and skills development for the youth and women.

The OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum (WBF) was established in 2007 to support implementation of the Ministerial *Declaration on Fostering Women's Entrepreneurship in the MENA region*, and to mainstream gender issues in the MENA-OECD Investment Programme's broader work on business climate reform. The WBF works with governments to improve policies and legislation impacting women's entrepreneurship development, and with local businesswomen's associations, NGOs and other stakeholders to share good practices for improving women entrepreneurs' access to business development services, financing, information and networks.

In an effort to further mainstream women's issues in broader policy fora, this conference will be held in conjunction with the Steering Group meeting of the MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development to be held on 22 November.

Participants

In addition to bringing together current members of the Women's Business Forum, the conference is open to representatives of MENA and OECD governments, notably SME policy makers and practitioners, as well as representatives of the business community, financial institutions, NGOs working on women's economic empowerment, and academia.

Languages

The conference will include interpretation in English, French and Arabic.

Documentation

Women's Business Forum Annual Meeting

- OECD(2012), *Women in Business: Policies to Support Women's Entrepreneurship Development in the MENA Region*
- "Fostering Women's Economic Integration in the MENA Region : OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum Activities (2010-2012)"
- "OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum: Note on the Role of the Co-chairs"
- "Pilot Financing Project by the OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum: Draft Proposal"
- "Stocktaking of Business Development Services for Women Entrepreneurs in the MENA Region: Draft Proposal"
- Documentation submitted by Women's Business Forum members on initiatives supporting women entrepreneurs, and other relevant documentation

Conference on Youth and Women's Employment

- AfDB, *et al.* (2012), "Promoting Youth Employment", in *African Economic Outlook 2012: Promoting Youth Employment*, OECD Publishing
- BAD, *et al.* (2012), « Promouvoir l'emploi des jeunes », dans *Perspectives économiques en Afrique 2012 : Promouvoir l'emploi des jeunes*, Éditions OCDE
- OECD, *et al.* (forthcoming), "Case Stories on Responsible Business Middle East and North Africa"
- OECD, IDRC (forthcoming), "New Entrepreneurs and High Growth Enterprises in the MENA Region"
- TUAC, "Quality Apprenticeships, A Common Approach by G20 Countries", An L20 Note for the G20 Employment Task Force 1-2 October 2012

Women's Business Forum Annual Meeting

8:45-9:00 **GROUP PHOTO**

9:00-9:20 **OPENING REMARKS**

*Gabriela Ramos, OECD Chief of Staff and Sherpa
Ambassador Dina Kawar, Ambassador of Jordan to France, Co-chair, OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum*

9.20-9.30 **SESSION 1: NOMINATION OF WOMEN'S BUSINESS FORUM CO-CHAIR**

Moderator:

Carolyn Ervin, Director, Directorate of Financial and Enterprise Affairs, OECD

9:30-10:30 **SESSION 2: CURRENT CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT IN MENA**

Moderator:

Carolyn Ervin, Director, Directorate of Financial and Enterprise Affairs, OECD

Keynote speaker:

Adrian Blundell-Wignall, Deputy Director, Directorate of Financial and Enterprise Affairs, Special Advisor to the Secretary General for Financial Markets, OECD

Roundtable on the current context for women's economic opportunity in MENA countries

MENA representatives (1 per economy) will give brief updates on women's economic situation in their respective economies. They will also highlight, where applicable, new initiatives put in place to support women as economic actors.

10:30-11:00 **COFFEE BREAK**

11:00-11:50 **SESSION 3: FINANCING WOMEN-LED BUSINESSES**

Women-led businesses tend to face disproportionately high financing barriers, due in part to lack of collateral, insufficient knowledge of financial products, and limited efforts by commercial banks to reach out to female clientele. Targeted financing products for women-led businesses have been used with success in many countries, including some MENA countries, benefitting both banks and women-led businesses. Financial institutions interested in improving their outreach to female clientele could benefit from improved information on the key success factors of such initiatives.

During this session, the OECD Secretariat will present its proposal to launch a pilot project on women's business financing. This project would bring together interested financial institutions to assess and monitor the impact of funding set-asides for women-led firms. Participants will also discuss activities to promote women's financial literacy.

Moderator:

Soukeina Bouraoui, Executive Director, Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), Tunisia

Speakers:

Nicola Ehlermann-Cache, Senior Policy Analyst, MENA-OECD Investment Programme
Nabila Freidji, President of Regional Commission, Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc, Morocco
Estelle Brack, Senior Advisor for International Affairs, Senior Economist, French Banking Federation
Dina Kaddouh, Director of Regional Office for the Maghreb, Union of Arab Banks
Iman Al Damen, Second Vice President, Jordan Forum for Business and Professional Women, Jordan
Flore-Anne Messy, OECD Senior Policy Analyst, Financial Education and Executive Secretary, International Network on Financial Education

Open discussion

11:50-12:40

SESSION 4: IMPROVING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS' ACCESS TO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Navigating the different stages of business growth and development is a challenge for all entrepreneurs, but can be especially difficult for women who often lack access to mainstream business support and networks where key information is shared. A number of initiatives exist in MENA countries to improve women's access to business support, including businesswomen's associations, business incubators, and in some cases female-tailored programmes of SME agencies.

This session will feature country experiences with promoting women's access to business development services. A draft proposal for engaging in a stocktaking of business development services for women entrepreneurs in the MENA region, developed by the OECD Secretariat, will be discussed.

Moderator:

Ambassador Birgitta Holst-Alani, Director, Swedish Institute, Egypt

Speakers:

Lois Stevenson, President, Lasma Consulting, Canada
Shareefa Fadhel, Managing Director, Roudha Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Qatar
Soraya Badraoui, Executive Director, Top Class Espresso and Member, MENA Businesswomen's Network, Morocco

Open discussion

12:40-13h00

SESSION 5: DEVELOPING SYNERGIES WITH OTHER WOMEN'S BUSINESS SUPPORT ASSOCIATIONS

A number of initiatives to support women entrepreneurs have been established in the MENA region. The Women's Business Forum seeks to act as a hub for collecting and disseminating information about these initiatives to promote knowledge-sharing, develop synergies and avoid duplication. This session will discuss concrete ways in which the Women's Business Forum can further promote exchanges between initiatives, including through its national task forces.

Moderator:

Nicola Ehlermann-Cache, Senior Policy Analyst, MENA-OECD Investment Programme

Speakers:

Yomna El Sheridy, President, Business Women in Egypt
Nadia Benacer, Head of Training and Business Development, Association des Algériennes Managers et chefs d'entreprises (AME), Algeria
Marion Abboud, Active Leaders For Women's Advancement in the Near East (ALWANE)
Olivia Lazare, Cartier Women's Initiative Awards, Cartier, France

Open discussion

13:00-14:30

LUNCH

Conference on Fostering Youth and Women's Employment

14:30-15:00 INTRODUCTION

Anthony O'Sullivan, Head of the Private Sector Development Division, OECD Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs
Lois Stevenson, President, Lasma Consulting

15:00-16:30 SESSION 6: ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN PROMOTING YOUTH AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Governments play a major role in workforce skills development, but the role of the private sector is also crucial. Investment projects typically include substantial technical and general staff training components, since projects must launch quickly and many skills may not be available on the local market. This session will focus on how businesses can contribute to the education and training efforts through their own initiatives and the potential synergies with the education and training systems of MENA countries. The MENA-OECD Investment Programme has collected good practice examples to encourage knowledge sharing on responsible business conduct in MENA and will present specific examples, which show how businesses can maximise the impact of their investments and contribute to sustainable economic and social development.

Moderator:

Bashar Al Zu'bi, Senior Advisor, Jordan Investment Board

Speakers:

Nahla Zeitoun, Programme Analyst, UNDP Egypt Country Office
Klaus Bader-Labarre, Senior Project Manager, German International Corporation
Frédérique Clavel, President, Paris Pionnières, France
Roland Schneider, Senior Policy Advisor, Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD

Open discussion

16:30-17:00 COFFEE BREAK

17:00-18:00 SESSION 7: GOVERNMENT ACTION TO PROMOTE YOUTH AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Despite strong growth and high investment inflows in the MENA region over the past years, job creation has not been sufficient to match population growth and the rapidly increasing labour market entrants. Across all countries of the region, unemployment is a particular challenge for women, the youth and university graduates. There are not enough jobs for the educated due to an industrial base that to a large extent relies on low-skilled labour. In other countries, companies have difficulties in finding qualified staff due to a lack of relevant skills among the youth. Governments can thus play an active role in overcoming the skills mismatch through directing investment in labour intensive sectors and reforming the educational system to provide the skills demanded. In this session, participants will evaluate policy responses by MENA and non-MENA governments aimed at narrowing the skills gap, and insights will be drawn for education and investment policy in the MENA region.

Moderator:

Nadia Belhaj Hassine, Senior Programme Specialist, International Development Research Center

Speakers:

Rezig Abdelouahab, Professor and Member of the Economic and Social Council of Algeria
Jan Rieländer, Economist, OECD Development Centre
Antonio Fanelli, Chief Economist of the Private Sector Development Division, OECD Directorate for Financial and

Enterprise Affairs

Open discussion

18:00-18:15 **CONCLUSIONS**

Ambassador Birgitta Holst-Alani, Director, Swedish Institute Alexandria

18:30-19:30 **COCKTAIL RECEPTION – ROGER OCKRENT ROOM OF THE CHÂTEAU DE LA MUETTE**

The OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum invites all participants in the MENA-OECD Investment Programme meetings to a cocktail reception, which will feature an address by the OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum Co-chairs.

About the OECD and the MENA-OECD Investment Programme

The OECD is a unique forum where 34 member governments work together to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalisation. The OECD is also at the forefront of efforts to understand and help governments address emerging policy issues such as finding new sources of growth, building skills, and restoring public trust in government and business. The OECD provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and work to co-ordinate domestic and international policies. It increasingly engages with a number of non-members who have become important actors in today's global economy.

The MENA-OECD Investment Programme was launched in 2005 at the request of Middle East and North African (MENA) governments to support investment policy reform for growth and employment in the region. Participating economies include Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Today, the Programme convenes representatives of these 18 MENA governments, OECD member countries and emerging economies to exchange good practices in a wide range of policy areas, leveraging the OECD model of policy dialogue and peer learning. It provides a platform for dialogue with civil society, the business community and academia to collectively identify priority business climate reforms and support their implementation.

The significant social, political and economic changes that have recently taken place in the MENA region have further reinforced the need for continued dialogue on business climate reform. It has highlighted the urgency of addressing pressing policy challenges, such as promoting economic growth, supporting employment, fighting corruption, strengthening rule of law, and fostering private sector and entrepreneurship development.

The Programme is an important component of the OECD's overall engagement with the MENA region. In early 2011, the G8 established the Deauville Partnership to support concerned countries in the region in the process of democratic and economic transition. The OECD was asked by the G8 to support this effort by providing policy recommendations to the financial, governance and trade and investment pillars of the Partnership, building on the ongoing policy support provided by the Programme.

The Programme benefits from the generous financial support of the Czech Republic, the European Commission, Germany, Japan, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States.

www.oecd.org/mena/investment