



# **The MENA-OECD Business Council**



**A unique channel for privileged dialogue between MENA and OECD business and governments  
on reform priorities for the MENA region**



## Background: the OECD and the MENA region

The MENA-OECD Investment Programme was launched in 2005 at the request of Middle East and North African (MENA) countries to mobilise private investment – foreign, regional and domestic – as a driving force for economic growth and employment throughout the region.

The MENA-OECD Programme's ability to achieve concrete outputs is closely related to its unique structure, combining a regional and country-specific approach to economic policy reform. Exchanging good practice on how to create an attractive environment for the private sector – addressing investment regulation, taxation, financial sector development and corporate governance – is at the core of the Programme's mandate.

Since its inception, the Programme has generated important results. For example, it was instrumental in securing the adherence of the first two MENA countries – Egypt (2007) and Morocco (2009) – to the OECD Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises, with Jordan also having applied for adherence. In terms of impact on national legislation, following recommendations of the MENA-OECD Investment Programme, the first Code of Corporate Governance was recently adopted in Morocco. The UAE federal government is now planning to introduce a new federal investment law and to define its linkages to federal company law, and is also considering the opening of more sectors to FDI.

With the advent of the global economic crisis, however, now more than ever before cooperation between governments and business at the highest levels is essential to increase reform momentum.

**The MENA-OECD Business Council has been created to provide the MENA and OECD business communities with a unique channel for privileged dialogue with governments on reform priorities for the region. One of its main objectives will be to produce concrete, measurable and time-bound deliverables on key areas of interest for business (financing, competitiveness, energy and infrastructure, responsible business conduct, women's entrepreneurship, etc) to drive real reform.**

The MENA-OECD Business Council was launched at the 2009 MENA-OECD Business Forum and Women Business Leaders Summit on 22 November 2009 in Marrakech, Morocco, under the High Patronage of His Majesty the King Mohammed VI.



## Objectives and value

The key objectives of the MENA-OECD Business Council are to:

- ◆ Strengthen public-private dialogue on business climate reform
- ◆ Provide high-level recommendations on selected policy priorities to maximise the impact and effectiveness of business climate reform
- ◆ Identify and drive high-impact deliverables that foster innovation, entrepreneurship and competitiveness in the MENA region
- ◆ Foster exchange and learning between business leaders in the MENA region, with input from OECD country experiences and good practices
- ◆ Promote business engagement in regional and country-based initiatives on leveraging technology for business, establishing competitive clusters, and advocating responsible business conduct
- ◆ Generate new business opportunities and networks

Although a number of existing fora for business dialogue exist already in the region, the MENA-OECD Business Council will be a distinctive force for business climate reform due to its unique characteristics:

- ◆ **Membership:** both OECD and MENA businesses represented at senior level
- ◆ **Concrete outputs:** a commitment to delivering measurable results to improve the MENA business climate
- ◆ **Access to OECD knowledge and expertise and the support of the OECD Secretariat :** the Council will be able to generate deliverables which are based on respected and objective OECD data and analysis
- ◆ **A parallel focus at both the regional and country level:** to foster greater regional cooperation and facilitate intra-regional investment flows



## Activities and deliverables

The MENA-OECD Business Council will be uniquely positioned to deliver on high-impact, time-bound projects geared at improving the MENA business climate. These projects will be outputs delivered by the Business Council's Task Forces:

Current proposed deliverables by Task Forces include:

TASK FORCE	PROPOSED OBJECTIVES	PROPOSED DELIVERABLES
<b>1. Enterprise Financing Network</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Create a platform to connect entrepreneurs, financiers and governments</li> <li>◆ Provide avenues for private sector involvement in key policy reforms relevant to entrepreneurship financing</li> <li>◆ Increase access for SMEs to financing/micro financing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The MENA 100 Business Plan Competition : a regional marketplace connecting entrepreneurs and finance (Manama, Bahrain 11 October 2009)</li> <li>◆ Consider setting up an investment fund that finances innovative enterprises</li> </ul>
<b>2. Responsible Business Conduct</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Raise awareness of responsible business conduct in MENA</li> <li>◆ Reference OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises</li> <li>◆ Establish guidelines for Corporate Social Responsibility and Responsible Business Conduct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Analysis and endorsement of good responsible business conduct models from existing companies</li> <li>◆ Extension of the OECD National Contact Point model to MENA countries</li> </ul>
<b>3. Women's Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Enhance awareness on the benefit of women entrepreneurship and develop targeted policies to support it</li> <li>◆ Improve business start-up rates and women's entry into the labour force by removing gender-related obstacles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Targeted policy recommendations at the regional and country level to remove legal and institutional obstacles inhibiting access to finance for SMEs with a particular focus on gender-related obstacles</li> <li>◆ Review of good practices and policy recommendations to tackle informality through a comparative assessment of tax regimes in the MENA region and their effects on second earners</li> <li>◆ Stocktaking of progress in improving the investment environment for women, including gender-related statistics for each MENA country.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Country Competitiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Monitor and highlight progress made by MENA countries in business climate reforms</li> <li>◆ Provide recommendations for further improvements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Bi-annual competitiveness report for MENA</li> <li>◆ Annual survey of business pulse</li> <li>◆ Promotion of MENA business good practices</li> </ul>
<b>5. Infrastructure and Energy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Develop and promote infrastructure projects in MENA region/countries</li> <li>◆ Expand renewable energy in the MENA region</li> <li>◆ Foster energy diversification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Report on priority policy barriers to infrastructure development and energy diversification</li> </ul>



# Membership criteria

## GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

A member of the MENA-OECD Business Council is a CEO, partner, director or vice-president of a company with operations/interests in either a MENA or OECD country. He/she boasts a long-standing record of strong corporate and social engagement, and seeks opportunities to leverage his or her extensive experiences and contacts in the business world to actively participate in the design of business climate development and reform policy. While the primary focus of the Business Council remains on mobilising company representatives directly, business organisations are also welcome to seek membership. Members may participate in the work of as many Task Forces as are of interest.

## TASK FORCE CO-CHAIRMANSHIP

Members with strong interest in the mandate of a particular Task Force, who would like to have a greater leadership role in the Council, and who commit to ensuring the delivery and promotion of a Task Force’s agreed outputs, may seek to become a co-Chair. Task Forces are led by one Co-Chair from a MENA country and one Co-Chair from an OECD country. Task Force Co-Chairs will also sit on the Executive Board.

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

Comprised of up to 25 senior business representatives, the Executive Board decides upon the Council’s strategic policy orientations and leads external communications. A Board member of the Council is a senior company executive who fulfils all of the above-mentioned criteria, and in addition displays an active engagement in the Business Council by overseeing its governance.





## Practical information

### TIME COMMITMENT

The Executive Board member of the MENA-OECD Business Council is expected to attend two Board meetings per year, to be held in either Paris or a MENA country. General members may manage their participation according to the needs of the Task Forces in which they participate as is necessary to ensure the timely delivery of agreed outputs.

### FEES

No fees are required at this stage of formation of the Business Council.

Key Events in 2010	Members
<p><b>March:</b> Executive Board meeting of the MENA-OECD Business Council (venue tbc)</p> <p><b>May:</b> MENA-OECD Business Council meets during the World Economic Forum (Marrakech)</p> <p><b>May/June:</b> MENA-OECD Business Council meets in parallel with the OECD Ministerial and Global Forum (OECD Headquarters, Paris)</p>	<p>The Business Council will engage companies, including <b>Accor, Alstom, Caixa, Delta Holding, Dubai Consultancy, Gulf International Bank, ING, Lafarge Group, Nahas Enterprises Group, Novo Nordisk, Oracle, Orascom, Rachid Mashreq Group, Société Générale, Telecom Italia, Total</b>, and many others.</p>

### Information about membership

To apply for membership, or for additional information about the Business Council, please contact: Ms. Anna Thiemann, Project Manager, at [anna.thiemann@oecd.org](mailto:anna.thiemann@oecd.org), tel: +33(0)1 45 24 98 87; and Mr. Carl Dawson, Project Manager, at [carl.dawson@oecd.org](mailto:carl.dawson@oecd.org), tel: +33(0)1 45 24 75 53.



[www.oecd.org/mena/investment/businesscouncil](http://www.oecd.org/mena/investment/businesscouncil)

The MENA-OECD Business Council is an initiative of the:

**The MENA-OECD Investment Programme**

[www.oecd.org/mena/investment](http://www.oecd.org/mena/investment)

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