

**Joint Business Statement
2nd Ministerial Conference
MENA-OECD Investment Programme
Cairo, Egypt, 28 November 2007**

-- Discussed and adopted at the MENA-OECD Business Forum, 27 November 2007 --

Preamble

On the occasion of the 2nd Ministerial Meeting of the MENA-OECD Investment Programme this statement is presented to Ministers by the MENA-OECD Business Network comprising the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD (BIAC), Egyptian Businessmen's Association (EBA), Union of Mediterranean Confederations of Enterprises (UMCE), the MENA-OECD Enterprise Financing Network, and other business associations, chambers of commerce and representatives of private companies active in the MENA region.

Action Points

Business commends governments on the progress made in investment policy reforms which has been reflected in rising inflows of foreign direct investment. We encourage governments to continue using the MENA-OECD Programme as a platform to discuss potential reforms, to advise regional authorities on reform initiatives and to expand the knowledge base of important factors that support and facilitate increased investment. High oil revenues and a healthy world economy offer a unique opportunity to modernise and diversify the economies of the MENA region which must not be missed. Business in particular:

- Urges governments to measure and benchmark business climate reforms using new tools like the joint OECD/World Bank Business Climate Development Strategy (BCDS) to measure and benchmark progress achieved so far;
- Asks for full partnership of the business community in discussion and implementation of business climate reforms in the region through effective consultation and participation beginning with the early stages of the reform process;
- Encourages measures to strengthen the independence of business organisations in the region through capacity building programmes and sharing of best practice with OECD governments;
- Welcomes new initiatives supporting the exchange of technology, know-how and financing between OECD and MENA economies such as the MENA-OECD Enterprise Financing Network;
- Stresses the need to explore ways of encouraging financial and technical support for human resource development, in particular business skills in the educational programmes of the region;
- Stresses the need for any regulation to be designed and implemented in a timely, predictable, transparent and non-discriminatory way;
- Recognises the importance of making the movement of business people in and out of the MENA region as easy as possible within the context of effective visa regimes; and

- Underlines the need for business and governments to unite in the fight against corruption, improving corporate governance and promoting corporate responsibility.
- Urges governments to commit adequate resources to developing an effective Research & Development base in the region;
- Urges governments to consider support for non-oil producing countries – namely Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Palestine – to further sustainable economic growth.

Commitment

The MENA-OECD Business Network is committed to:

- Supporting governments' efforts to promote investment in the region, particularly in the areas of infrastructure development, manufacturing and technology;
- Encouraging efficient use of combined public and private assets through public-private partnerships:
- Working towards strengthening the positive linkage of foreign direct investment with local economies with a particular emphasis on local job creation;
- Supporting a regional dialogue on corporate responsibility to include voluntary business initiatives aimed addressing societal concerns in areas such as environment, industrial relations, corruption and technology transfer;
- Supporting the implementation of a new generation of corporate governance codes and regulation in the region benefiting from OECD best practice; and
- Supporting capacity building initiatives for independent business associations in the region.

Business thanks the Ministers from MENA countries and the Egyptian Minister for Investment for hosting the Ministerial Conference. We hope that this conference will be a catalyst for further improvements of the business climate in MENA countries that will attract more domestic and foreign investment for the benefit of the economies and societies of the region.