



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Myron A. Brilliant
Executive Vice President and
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August 22, 2014

Dear Colleagues:

In light of recent events in the Middle East, I wanted to take the opportunity to reach out to you. Over the past year, as we conceived and launched the Middle East Commercial Center (MECC), we all knew that the political realities could ebb and flow and that there would be challenges along the way. Please know that we are sensitive to the political realities and we are thinking about all our friends in the region during this challenging time.

We have therefore altered our plans for this coming fall. The next MECC Forum in Cairo, originally planned for October, will now take place in February or March 2015 in Cairo. Our team will keep you informed of the new dates by mid-September. Despite this change, we continue to push forward with more momentum than ever on MECC's key initiatives and programs in the coming months, discussed below.

The **MECC Technology Forum—taking place in Istanbul on November 19-20**—will bring together a group of stakeholders seeking to build a stronger Information and Communication Technology ecosystem in the Middle East. The forum will also see the launch of the Middle East North Africa Venture Association, for which we have received significant support from our partners and experts all across the region. More information can be found in the MECC update below.

Following the MECC Tech Forum, we will hold a **MECC Leadership Forum in Washington, DC on December 8-9** to bring together National Steering Committees, task force committees, and the International Board of Advisors. At this gathering, we will examine the MECC's progress and chart a roadmap for 2015.

In addition to these major meetings, we anticipate meeting several milestones in the coming months, including:

- Opening **MECC's first regional office** in Istanbul, Turkey, in November.
- Producing the "**Middle East Trade Facilitation and Logistics Report**," developed by MECC's Movement & Access Task Force, to identify targeted solutions to improve the movement of goods.
- Producing a study on impediments to greater participation by women in business in the region. The study will look at challenges, opportunities, and case studies related to legislative issues, social values, and education. This study will inform the Women in Business task force's efforts to promote stronger women representation on boards of organizations in the Middle East.

We welcome your feedback and ask each of you to engage closely with these important initiatives. While the situation in the region remains fluid and uncertain, business will continue and there is a lot for us to do. Our MECC team here in Washington, led by Khush Choksy and Josh Kram, will be in close contact with you.

Warmest regards,



Myron A. Brilliant

MECC Update: Summer 2014

Check it out: MECC Mid-Year Report

There has been a lot of regional activity related to the MECC and its task forces. Click [here](#) to read our MECC Mid-Year report, which reviews the progress and focus of each of these groups.

In Case You Missed It:

What is the MECC? Check out the new video below to learn about the MECC's mission and please share it with your colleagues in the region.



Have you saved the date?



MECC Technology Forum (MECC Tech) November 19-20 - Istanbul, Turkey

The MECC will host the MECC Tech Forum on November 19-20 in Istanbul, Turkey, to bring together all of the key stakeholders needed to support an ICT startup ecosystem, including entrepreneurs, venture capital funds, limited partners, incubators, accelerators, angel investors, policy makers, regulators, academia and legal experts, and accounting firms. On this occasion, the MECC will launch a new association which will dramatically build capacity to drive the development of ICT innovation and business in the region. Some 150 collaborators from across the Middle East as well as the international technology community will be invited to participate in this new project.

More information about registration for this forum will be released in the coming weeks.

MECC News

MECC Hosts Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority

The Chamber's Middle East Commercial Center hosted Dr. Kamel Mahadin, Chief Commissioner of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA). Last month, *Financial Times* and *FDI Magazine* ranked the Aqaba International Industrial Estate in the top 10 of all Middle East special economic zones of the future. Dr. Mahadin and his top leadership met with companies and investors in the United States as part of a road show to promote Aqaba, which is a leading hub for logistics, tourism, real estate, and industry. As a great example for boosting inward investment into Jordan and the region, ASEZA will provide a case for implementing a successful free zone that offers more than just tax credits.



Promoting the Initiative for the Palestinian Economy through the Middle East Commercial Center



The MECC hosted Kito De Boer, Director of the Initiative for the Palestinian Economy (IPE). In a forum with corporate representatives and policymakers, De Boer discussed IPE's efforts in partnership with the Palestinian National Authority and Office of the Quartet Representative to affect transformative change and growth in the Palestinian economy and create hundreds of

thousands of new jobs. By identifying opportunities to grow eight different commercial sectors, IPE seeks to help attract Palestinian diaspora money as well as foreign investors to the Palestinian market. The sectors include agriculture, construction, tourism, ICT, light manufacturing, building materials, energy, and water.

From the *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*: The Real Middle East Crisis is Economic

"President Obama surprised many recently when he diagnosed the crisis gripping Iraq as partly an economic one, noting that Iraqi Sunnis were "detached from the global economy" and thus frustrated in achieving their aspirations. While Iraq's chaos has many sources, the president is nevertheless on to something; and it's not just Iraqi Sunnis, but the entire Middle East that is detached from the global economy." [Read more.](#)

The Middle East Commercial Center (MECC) is a new, private sector-led alliance of business leaders from across the region working together to promote greater intra-regional trade and investment and address critical economic challenges and opportunities. The MECC is a "coalition of action," which harnesses the collective power of more than 80 business organizations that have pledged to work together to advance regional economic cooperation and remove barriers to commerce.

You can sign up to be on the MECC Email List [here](#). Please direct all questions to MECC@USChamber.com.