

Uniting Principles

Middle East Commercial Center (MECC)

Winter Meeting
February 2014

On February 25-26, 2014, over 250 business leaders from over a dozen countries gathered at the Dead Sea in Jordan for the Winter Meeting of the Middle East Commercial Center (MECC). This was the third meeting of the MECC in ten months in support of a new regional architecture to strengthen intra-regional commercial activity and facilitate trade and investment in the region. This group represents the foremost business and trade organizations, American Chambers of Commerce abroad, national chambers of commerce and industry, and major companies across the world. Multilateral organizations, including the World Bank, the United Nations, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development are participating and cooperating with the MECC.

Following the meeting, this group of business leaders put forward the following statement of uniting principles:

- We are striving to create opportunity and jobs for the people of this region to make a difference in their lives and foster stronger commercial ties between our economies.
- We are committed to supporting private enterprise, open markets, and enhanced trade and investment relations throughout the region.
- We pledge to work together to promote regional economic growth and remove existing barriers to commerce.
- We believe that the Middle East Commercial Center can help deepen cooperation and strengthen relations among our business communities.
- We will be open, inclusive, respectful and transparent in all of our efforts under this initiative.
- We have committed to “a coalition of action” to advance projects and promote public policies that contribute to more regional economic integration and greater opportunity for foreign investment in the region.
- We will inform, educate, and advocate with our respective governments in ways that can contribute and support intra-regional trade and foster private sector growth.

Focus for Regional Action

We have identified areas of agreement and concrete steps that we and our governments can take to advance regional economic integration and remove barriers to commercial activity. The MECC will initially focus on a limited number of the most pressing economic and strategic issues through focused task forces:

- **Movement of Goods and Market Access.** The MECC will develop projects and joint policy advocacy to promote new trade corridors, supply chains, and access points in the region to move goods, in coordination with security and trade experts, government officials, and interested businesses.
- **Natural Resource Cooperation.** The MECC will promote policy and project ideas to advance a strong energy future for the region, including development of natural gas, renewable energy technology cooperation, and water management solutions.
- **Special Economic Zones.** The MECC will enhance SEZ regimes through joint development-management efforts, creating mechanisms for knowledge sharing, enhancing vocational training, and identifying investment opportunities to connect and expand zones throughout the region.
- **Entrepreneurship Development.** The MECC will enhance connections between young entrepreneurs and investors across the region, identify and remove bureaucratic and legal obstacles to entrepreneurship, and promote investment in small business.

The MECC also identified key areas to address in a regional context such as:

- **Finance & Development.** The MECC is developing a finance and development arm to inform MECC's decision-making, advise on economic and development trends, and identify new mechanisms for organizing and deploying public and private capital to enable regional growth.
- **Health care.** The MECC will look at regional health care issues to identify areas for connectivity in developing shareable solutions, systems, and innovations.
- **Education.** The MECC will develop joint efforts to link key stakeholders in the region, such as universities and companies, to support a well-educated, well-prepared work force for professional jobs.
- **Palestinian economic development.** The MECC will promote and advance efforts encouraging Palestinian economic growth and development.
- **Regional Tourism.** The MECC will bring together government and business interests across the Middle East to promote a regional approach to attracting tourists.
- **Women in Business.** The MECC will promote and encourage mechanisms to help increase opportunities for women to serve on corporate boards and in the C-suite, mentor women at all stages of their careers, and build a network for women entrepreneurs in the region.

We believe that there are huge impediments to intra-regional trade which too often discourage foreign investment in the Middle East. Yet, there are huge opportunities in the region: a young well-educated workforce, new sources of natural resources, expanding infrastructure, and centers of world-class innovation. We believe that now is the time to combine our efforts and work together toward this common purpose.

List of Participating Organizations:

1. U.S. Chamber of Commerce
2. The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB)
3. American Chamber of Commerce in Jordan
4. U.S.-Egypt Business Council
5. Amman Chamber of Commerce
6. Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce
7. The Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce
8. U.S.-Turkey Business Council
9. American Business Association – Eastern Provinces/Saudi Arabia
10. American Business Council of Dubai & the Northern Emirates
11. Alexandria Chamber of Commerce
12. American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt
13. Amcham Turkey/American Business Forum in Turkey (ABFT)
14. Amman Center for Peace and Development
15. Chamber of Commerce of Nazareth
16. Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK)
17. American Chamber of Commerce in Palestine
18. Jordan Exporters Association
19. Israel – America Chamber of Commerce
20. Egypt - U.S. Business Council
21. International Chamber of Commerce - Israel
22. International Chamber of Commerce - Palestine
23. International Freight Forwarders Association
24. Israeli – Palestinian Chamber of Commerce
25. Manufacturers Association of Israel
26. Oasis 500
27. Endeavor Global
28. American Chamber of Commerce in Bahrain
29. The Portland Trust
30. International Road Transport Union (IRU)
31. Palestine Trade Center (PALTRADE)
32. Palestinian Information Technology Association of Companies
33. Palestine International Business Forum
34. Ready Made Garments Export Council
35. Turkish-American Business Association (TABA)
36. Turkish Contractors Association
37. Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV)
38. American Chamber of Commerce in Qatar
39. Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE)
40. Peres Center for Peace
41. Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce
42. Young Entrepreneurs – Palestine
43. Binational Industrial Research and Development Foundation (BIRD)
44. Syrian Business Forum
45. Jordan Hotel Association
46. Turkish Textile Employers Association
47. AmCham in Kurdistan Region of Iraq
48. Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce
49. International Council for Swedish Industry
50. Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus Business Council
51. American Business Group of Riyadh
52. Bethlehem Multidisciplinary Industrial Park
53. Palestinian Shippers Council