

# MENA-OECD BUSINESS ADVISORY BOARD

## Launch Event Conclusions

### Building bridges between the public and private sector

The MENA-OECD Business Advisory Board (BAB) was launched on September 20-21, 2018, in Madrid, in an event hosted by the Confederation of Employers and Industries of Spain (CEOE) –co-chair of the initiative together with the Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA). Nearly 200 participants joined from 20 countries, including business organisations and public officials from MENA countries (Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, the Palestinian Authority, Tunisia and Yemen); OECD countries, including France (MEDEF), Germany (BDI), Israel (MAI), Italy (Confindustria), Portugal (CIP), and Spain (CEOE); and regional organisations (Businessmed, CIPE, and the Union for the Mediterranean). The Business Industry Advisory Committee (BIAC) actively supported the organisation of the event actively.



Participants had the chance to exchange on how Public Private Dialogue (PPD) can support and strengthen economic policy. Discussions centred on the role business organisations can play in building business linkages, promoting gender balance in senior management and corporate boards, operating in fragile contexts, and boosting social dialogue.

### Key messages

- ◆ **Public-private dialogue is crucial to enhance economic policy.** Channels of dialogue are important to achieve inclusive growth. Only if there is a platform to exchange between different parts of the society, can there be sustainable solutions to national and regional problems. But, although there is consensus about the benefits of PPD, it is more difficult to put it into action and to achieve results. Leadership is a prerequisite, and positive examples can encourage others to follow their path.
- ◆ **Public-private dialogue needs to be integrated into a broader social dialogue.** PPD initiatives are different from social dialogue efforts, where workers and civil society organisations are represented. But although they differ in nature and scope, they need to be connected. The MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme is committed to involve social partners into the discussions of the BAB.

- ◆ **Women and youth, who are typically left behind, need to be included.** In 2015, youth unemployment in the MENA region almost reached 30%. Similarly, women are not included in the work force with the women's labour participation rate of only 22%. By including women and youth in PPD, they can raise their voice with regards to challenges specific to them. Moreover, based on their experience they can contribute to solving pressing issues. This will help to encourage more people to engage in economic and entrepreneurial activities, boosting their contribution to inclusive economic growth.

*"What matters is not the count of women in the room, but that women count"* Alicia Cebada, Mujeres por África

- ◆ **Business linkages can help to overcome existing barriers and create opportunities.** The MENA region is still characterised by low intra-regional trade, and bridges between employers' organisations can lead to a decrease in the various existing trade barriers. Many organisations already promote the internationalisation of their members, but with closer ties to other associations this can increase regional trade flows. This is especially true in areas of conflict and fragility that companies are avoiding because of the associated risks. These linkages do not only reduce the risk for companies but can actively support stabilisation efforts in the region.

## Next Steps

- **Link the BAB and the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme:** Focus groups will be created to channel the views of the private sector into the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme Working Groups and to participate in the respective meetings. The Working Groups are:

Investment and trade

SMEs and entrepreneurship

Corporate governance

Business integrity

Women's economic empowerment

Economic resilience in fragile situations

- **Develop a Youth Business Platform:** The Youth Business Platform will be developed in the next months to represent young businesspeople and give them a dedicated platform where they can exchange and discuss the specific issues they face.
- **Conduct peer-learning activities:** Activities to promote peer learning between MENA and OECD business organisations will be developed.
- **Expand the network and the analytical work:** The BAB will seek to involve other interested organisations and new analytical studies focusing on PPD and capacity-building activities will be conducted.
- **Plan the next annual regional event:** The next annual event of the MENA-OECD will take place back-to-back with the MENA-OECD Ministerial Conference, to be organised in late spring 2019.

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<http://oe.cd/BAB>