



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 3, 2014
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U.S. - ARAB CHAMBER SUPPORTS GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUMMIT IN MARRAKESH, MOROCCO

Event Draws 6,800 Business Leaders and Government Officials from Africa, the United States, and Around the Globe

Vice President Joe Biden: "Think Different" to Succeed as an Entrepreneur

Marrakech, Morocco – The Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES), which took place on November 19 - 21, brought together more than 6,800 government officials, business leaders, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), media representatives, and students. This was the fifth edition of the GES, begun by the Obama Administration in 2010 and intended as a platform for encouraging start-ups and creating economic growth through job creation. This year's event, held under the patronage of H.M. King Mohammed VI, took place in Marrakech, Morocco.

Some of the American and Moroccan government officials who spoke included: Hon. Joe Biden, Vice President of the United States; H.E. Abdelilah Benkirane, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco; H.E. Salaheddine Mezouar, Morocco's Minister of Foreign Affairs; Hon. Penny Pritzker, U.S. Secretary of Commerce; H.E. Moulay Hafid Elalamy, Morocco's Minister of Industry, Commerce & Investment; Hon. Maria Contreras-Sweet, Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration. America's Ambassador to Morocco, Hon. Dwight L. Bush, and Morocco's Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Rachad Bouhlal, were also in attendance.



U.S. Vice President Joe Biden: "The opportunities out there for entrepreneurship have never been greater than they are right now."

(Photo courtesy of GES)



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The National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) promoted the GES through its website and throughout NUSACC’s membership. The Chamber’s President & CEO, David Hamod, traveled to Morocco to support business-to-business relationships and to moderate a panel discussion on “Expand Your Horizons,” a new initiative launched by INJAZ Al-Arab.

“This was an amazing gathering of talented individuals from 50 nations,” Hamod noted, “offering inspiration to the more than 22 million individuals whose lives were touched by this event – in Marrakesh and online. This GES could be a game-changer for entrepreneurship in North Africa, and I would like to thank H.M. King Mohammed VI and the people of Morocco for their generous hospitality.”

Hamod joined numerous business leaders from the United States and Africa at the GES, including three of President Obama’s “Presidential Ambassadors for Global Entrepreneurship”: Mr. Hamdi Ulukaya, President & CEO of Chobani; Ms. Daphne Koller, Co-Founder of Coursera; and Ms. Alexa von Tobel, Founder & CEO of Learnvest.com. Some of the Moroccan captains of industry who participated in the GES as sponsors included:



H.E. Abdelilah Benkirane, Prime Minister of Morocco, formally opened the GES and provided remarks on behalf of H.M. Mohammed VI, King of Morocco.

(Photo courtesy of GES)

Miriem Bensalah Chaqroun, Chair of the General Confederation of Moroccan Enterprises; Abdeslam Ahizoune, Chairman & CEO of Maroc Telecom; Driss Benhima, Chairman & CEO of Royal Air Maroc; Mohamed el-Kettani, Chairman & CEO of Attijariwafa Bank; and Othman Benjelloun, Chairman & CEO of BMCE Bank, who announced a \$1 million fund during GES to recognize Africa’s top entrepreneur on an annual basis.

Morocco is the first African nation to host the Global Entrepreneurship Summit, but it will not be the last. The 2015 GES will also take place in Africa in a yet-to-be-announced location.

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Morocco’s Prime Minister, H.E. Abdelilah Benkirane, formally opened the GES. He provided remarks on behalf of H.M. Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, which served to welcome guests and set the stage for three days of exploration, networking, and mentoring. The speech of H.M. Mohammed VI began: “Founded almost a thousand years ago, this city [Marrakesh] has, for centuries,



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nurtured creativity, innovation and progress and has played a key role in their mutually beneficial transmission to the Saharan, Arab, Muslim and, finally, European worlds.”

The speech continued, “Morocco believes wholeheartedly in the Summit’s objectives. [Morocco] has been devoting its energies to promoting human and sustainable development and investing in entrepreneurship Entrepreneurship and innovation are twin values; they are both springboards for freedom, social mobility and prosperity, provided that the business environment is favorable.”

The speech of His Majesty went on to say, “Education is an essential step, a prerequisite for the maturation process that leads people to think critically and to hone their skills so that they are able to seize an economic, technological, or social opportunity when they see one Today, young people have an open window to the world thanks to new information and communications technology, which makes universal knowledge – both theoretical and applied – an asset shared by all humans.”

In his concluding words, King Mohammed VI noted, “To overcome the pessimism that has plagued our continent, our governments should instill self-confidence in our young people so that they can believe in their ability to learn and to become entrepreneurs The same applies to female entrepreneurship, which holds so much promise for our economies and our societies that we all need to encourage it; otherwise, we will be depriving ourselves of a huge potential.”

With this in mind, the initial day of GES Marrakech concentrated on “Women’s Entrepreneurship Day,” which included sessions focused on success stories, a business-to-business showcase, and a start-up pitch competition that engaged Jill Biden, Second Lady of the United States.



David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO, moderated the panel, “Expand Your Horizons,” a new initiative launched by INJAZ Al-Arab.





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Hon. Joe Biden, the ranking U.S. official, marked his birthday at the GES and was spontaneously serenaded in a rousing rendition of “Happy Birthday” by the thousands of entrepreneurs and students attending the opening plenary session. He noted, “I’ve come here to an ancient Muslim nation at the crossroads of Africa, the Arab world, and Europe to talk about what it takes for all nations to succeed in the 21st century, what is required to create thriving, innovative societies worthy of the talents of their young people.”



Keynote speakers who opened the GES included (from left to right): Hon. Joe Biden, Vice President of the United States; H.E. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of Gabon; H.E. Alpha Condé, President of Guinea; and H.E. Abdelilah Benkirane, Prime Minister of Morocco.

(Photo courtesy of GES)

He continued, “Many of the countries represented here today have well over 60 percent of their population under the age of 30. In the Middle East and Africa, for example, in a race to create tens of millions of jobs just to break even, and as the demographic wave of young people enters the labor force, it doesn’t matter where you live if people cannot get educated; or they get educated and they can’t get a job; or they get a job and can’t earn a decent living; or they can earn a living, but it gets siphoned off or stolen by corruption; or if half the population -- women -- cannot contribute to prosperity. Those countries caught in that vortex

are not positioned to succeed in the 21st century because real and lasting stability depends on governments and citizens of this region finding a way to work together to expand opportunity and unlock the enormous talents of your people.”

“The challenge is formidable,” Biden said, “but there are also incredible opportunities. When I travel the region and the entire developing world, I see young people with limitless promise to make not only their countries but the whole world better The opportunities out there for entrepreneurship have never been greater than they are right now.”

The United States has been a leader in promoting entrepreneurship, the Vice President suggested, because “stamped into the DNA of every naturalized American, as well as native



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born, is an inherent skepticism for orthodoxy. You cannot fundamentally change the world without breaking the old. It takes a value system that gives people the freedom to try and to fail or, as they say in fabled Silicon Valley, to ‘fail forward’ without being criticized.”

Referencing a speech at Stanford University by Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple, Biden exhorted, “Think different! You cannot think different where you cannot breathe free. You cannot think different where you cannot challenge orthodoxy. And you cannot think different where you cannot speak your mind.”

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Hon. Penny Pritzker, U.S. Secretary of Commerce, shared insights from her years of experience as an American business leader. For entrepreneurship to thrive, she said, it needs an environment that encourages risk, adheres to the rule of law, provides access to capital, protects intellectual property, and enables start-ups to open and close with relative ease. Equally important to the entrepreneurial spirit, she said, is hope. “Hope is viral,” she suggested, extolling Arab and African entrepreneurs to go back to their respective communities to share the good news.



(Right to left, back row): U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker, Second Lady Jill Biden, and U.S. SBA Administrator Maria Contreras-Sweet meet with female entrepreneurs from the MENA region.

(Photo courtesy of GES)

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NUSACC has participated in previous GES Summits – including those in Washington DC (2010), Turkey (2011), United Arab Emirates (2012), and Malaysia (2013) – but Marrakesh was arguably the best ever. According to official statistics, GES in Marrakesh attracted:

- 6,800 participants, including some 2,000 overseas visitors, representing 50 nations
- 190 speakers
- Nearly 400 journalists from 30 nations



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- More than 450 business-to-business (B2B) meetings registered during Women's Entrepreneurship Day (November 19)
- 600 students
- 22 million people from across the globe followed the GES on social media
- Over 5 million "hits" on the GES website following the opening session of the GES.

The two-day Summit was dominated by "how to" panel discussions that touched on fundraising, technological innovation, energy, infrastructure, sustainable cities, social entrepreneurship, crowdsourcing, health, agriculture and food safety, and media.

Especially heartfelt was a speech given by Hamdi Ulukaya, President & CEO of Chobani. In just a few short years, Chobani has gone from having a modest presence in Upstate New York to controlling nearly 40 percent of the Greek yogurt market in the United States. He shared insights into his "rags-to-riches" immigrant story, one that started in Turkey and flourished in a way that could only be accomplished in the United States, he suggested.



David Hamod, President & CEO of NUSACC (left) with Hamdi Ulukaya, President & CEO of Chobani (right).

To succeed as an entrepreneur, Ulukaya noted, *purpose* is every bit as important as business concepts and funding. One has to be "not okay with things the way they are," in his words. He often counsels youth to eschew becoming an entrepreneur, he admitted. If they can't kill their continuing interest, he suggested, then "maybe they've got what it takes to be an entrepreneur."

The founder of Chobani opined, "There is no one who can teach you what it takes to start your journey." It is a humbling learning experience along the way, he said, fraught with misgivings and mistakes, but one that can be life-changing. He concluded, "Success is a journey, not a destination."

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The closing session included Hon. Maria Contreras-Sweet, Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration, and H.E. Salaheddine Mezouar, Morocco's Foreign Minister.



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Mexico-born Contreras-Sweet offered an immigrant American success story of her own: She described the advice of her grandmother, a cleaning lady. “Work hard and you may someday become a secretary,” her grandmother counseled. That is exactly what happened, Contreras-Sweet said, pointing to her Secretary-level position in the Obama cabinet.

Foreign Minister Mezouar congratulated the Moroccan entrepreneurs and students for their dynamism and “formidable energy.” He said, “Youth is the future of Morocco and Africa, and the culture of creation is the main pillar of development. This summit and the meeting of His Majesty the King Mohamed VI with U.S. Vice President Joe Biden reinforced the strategic partnership that our two countries share.”

Mezouar continued: “The great change that is taking place in countries like Morocco is phenomenal. In the past, people would look at entrepreneurship with great suspicion, but today it is at the heart of Moroccan dynamism. A big part of this change is due to the private sector, which knew how to manage the changes that had to be made. [The private sector] understood how beneficial such openings are and all the fantastic energy that comes from it.”

Foreign Minister Mezouar concluded, “Africa is a continent that has so much potential. It represents a force for the future of the world ... I know that the view of Africa by the United States has changed. The last summit [in Washington DC] in August really showed this change in mentality. We need you as honest and determined partners who understand all the challenges of the continent, and we need your fantastic energy!”



H.E. Salaheddine Mezouar, Morocco’s Foreign Minister: “Youth is the future of Morocco and Africa, and the culture of creation is the main pillar of development.”

The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce, widely regarded as the voice of American business in the Arab world, is in touch with business communities across the United States and serves as the U.S. point of contact for the national chambers of commerce in the 22 Arab nations. On a daily basis, NUSACC works closely with leaders throughout the Arab world, as well as high-level decision makers in the U.S. business community, public policy research centers, multilateral institutions, nongovernmental organizations, media, and the U.S. Government.