



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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Under the Patronage of H.M. King Abdullah II of Jordan, U.S.-Arab Chamber Supports MENA ICT Forum Focused on “Disruptive Technologies”

U.S. Ambassador: Jordan’s ICT Sector “Serves as a Pillar of the Knowledge Economy and a Resource for Increased Employment and Foreign Investment”

Amman, Jordan – For the third year in a row, the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) traveled to Jordan to support the MENA ICT Forum, a regional event that showcases the latest advancements in Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Held in Amman, Jordan, the opening of the Forum was attended by H.M. King Abdullah II and H.M. Queen Rania Al-Abdullah. This year’s Forum focused on disruptive technologies and their impact on business, the economy, and the way that people live and work.

The two-day, high-profile event attracted over 2,000 industry leaders and experts. Jordan’s Minister of Information and Communications Technology, H.E. Azzam Sleit, emphasized the importance of the Forum’s contributions to developing the local and regional ICT sector. He said, “The contributions of the telecommunications and information technology sector in Jordan’s GDP has reached 12.8 percent,” and he pointed out that Jordan’s 30 government and private universities add about 6,000 ICT graduates to the local market each year.



H.M. King Abdullah II and H.M. Queen Rania Al-Abdullah attended the opening of the MENA ICT Forum.



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NUSACC was represented by Amin G. Salam, Vice President for Business Development, who highlighted the Chamber's increasingly important role in promoting business relations between American and Arab technology companies. In that context, Salam provided a briefing on the upcoming [High Tech Road Show](#) (HTRS), which will take place in January 2015 in Las Vegas and three cities in Texas (Houston, Austin and Dallas/Fort Worth). (www.HTRSusa.com)

Salam stated, "Our Chamber is pleased to support the Forum, and we are proud of our longstanding partnership with the Information Technology Association of Jordan (INT@J). Working together, we have helped to pave the way to the MENA region for numerous U.S. companies, particularly small & medium-sized enterprises." He went on to say, "ICT globally has grown to incorporate education, health, finance, insurance,



Amin Salam, NUSACC VP of Business Development, offered a briefing on the upcoming High Tech Road Show to the United States.



H.E. Azzam Sleit, Jordan's Minister of ICT, emphasized the importance of the Forum's contributions to developing the local and regional ICT sector.

engineering & design, clean tech, fashion, and a wide variety of other sectors. The MENA ICT Forum plays a key role in promoting these sectors with a view to increasing productivity, creating jobs, and accelerating economic development."

Mr. Khaled Hudhud, the newly appointed CEO of INT@J noted: "We are very proud of, and enthusiastic about, our partnership with the National U.S. Arab Chamber of Commerce. We value their continued support of the MENA ICT Forum and INT@J, and we look forward to building on this relationship to accomplish even more."

U.S. Government Support for ICT in Jordan

The Honorable Alice G. Wells, U.S. Ambassador to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, attended the opening ceremony of the Forum to highlight the U.S. Government's growing commitment to Jordan's ICT sector. She noted, "Our support for the Forum is part of our commitment to the expansion of Jordan's ICT sector, which serves as a pillar of the knowledge economy and as a resource for increased employment and direct foreign investment." She went on to point out that the Forum provides an opportunity for industry leaders to share innovative visions, including new Forum sessions this year that highlighted female investors and the increasingly important role of the Jordanian Diaspora.



According to the U.S. Government, the Jordan Competitiveness Program, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), provided significant technical and financial support to the MENA ICT Forum as part of ongoing efforts to improve the business environment for Jordanian companies and to increase Jordan's competitiveness. The program – which focuses on ICT, clean technology, and healthcare and life sciences – is promoting job creation, increased foreign direct investment, and more exports.

Leveraging the MENA ICT Forum, the Jordan Competitiveness Program introduced two important initiatives: the development of angel investing in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the creation of *Connect.jo*, which is designed to leverage the expertise of Jordan's professional Diaspora in the United States.

"The project brought this technology-focused group together to share their business knowledge, enable students to study abroad, help Jordanian business expand in the U.S. and encourage firms to invest in Jordan," USAID noted. During the event, according to USAID, technology experts learned about the new network of angel investors being created to focus on early investing in smaller firms in medical, clean technology, and ICT with great growth potential.



Hon. Alice Wells, U.S. Ambassador to Jordan: "Our support for the Forum is part of our commitment to the expansion of Jordan's ICT sector."

Photo credit: U.S. Embassy Jordan

Telecoms' Role at the Forum

Telecommunications companies were well represented at the MENA ICT Forum, including three "Telecom Partners" of the Forum: Umniah, Zain Jordan, and Orange Jordan.

Umniah announced a strategic partnership with Cisco during the Forum. The CEO of Umniah, Ihab Hinnawi, said, "Cisco's certification for our services shows that we maintain the highest innovative technical solutions and services, which effectively strengthens our market influence. The certificate for being Cisco Cloud and Managed Services Advanced Partner worldwide will allow us to place the Cisco brand on all of our Cloud and internet services."

Cisco's General Manager for Iraq and the Levant, Hani Raad, replied, "Umniah deserves this certificate . . . this also gives Cisco a greater presence in the local market, as it helps increase the usage of popular services such as cloud computing among corporations."

Speaking at a separate press conference, Ahmad Hanandeh – CEO of Zain Jordan – said the Forum comes at a time when all telecom operators are facing challenges. "At present, we need increased investments to develop the infrastructure, especially the Internet, to meet



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the increasing demand on data consumption,” Hanandeh noted. “This is a transitional period for all operators, and we must keep up with the latest technologies.”

The CEO of Orange Jordan, Jean-Francois Thomas, said the Forum provides an opportunity for exchanging expertise and ideas on how to tackle challenges, offering a platform to build partnerships in this sector. Thomas added: “It gives me great pleasure to announce Orange Fab — Orange’s flagship startup accelerator program. This initiative represents our efforts to lead the charge when it comes to supporting young entrepreneurs, both locally & regionally.”

About the MENA ICT Forum

The Forum is the MENA region’s premier biennial ICT industry event, held in Jordan under the patronage of His Majesty King Abdullah II. Held in 2002, 2004, and 2006 as the “Jordan ICT Forum,” the event was rebranded in 2010 and 2013 as the “MENA ICT Forum.” The Forum showcases the entire MENA region’s ICT success stories and discusses the latest trends, opportunities, and future outlooks.

NUSACC played an active role in the 2013 MENA ICT Forum (www.menaictforum.com), which was held on the shores of Jordan’s Dead Sea.

According to organizers, the Forum features a content-rich agenda that covers current and future issues related to regional investment climates, legislative supportive systems, infrastructure & communications, emerging technologies, and education & human capital development. These issues are addressed in a context that is highly relevant to the Middle East and North Africa, thereby providing the business community, government decision-makers, and various stakeholders with a “big picture” view of the region’s current trends, opportunities, and recommended approaches for leveraging MENA’s potential for the future.

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.



Amin Salam, NUSACC VP of Business Development (right) with Khaled Hudhud, CEO of INT@J and organizer of the MENA ICT Forum 2015 (left).