



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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## OMAN TECH ROAD SHOW VISITS SEATTLE AND SILICON VALLEY

*eOman and Information Technology Authority VIPs Meet 40  
U.S. Tech and Research Entities During 10-Day Visit to the USA*

*Oman's Undersecretary of Commerce: Free Trade Agreement, Investment in  
Infrastructure, and Economic Diversification Make Sultanate a Growing ICT Hub*

*Lieutenant Governor of Washington State Tells Omani Delegates: "We Are All  
Global Citizens. In Washington Today, Every Industry is a Tech Industry."*

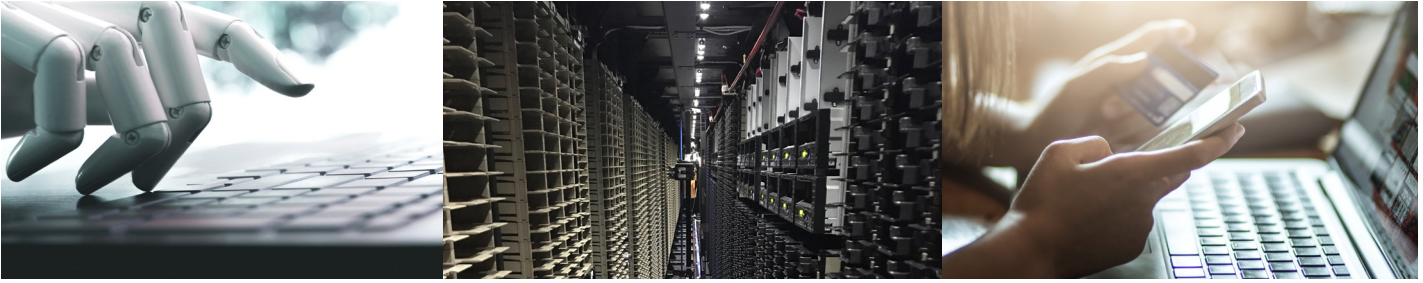
The National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) recently organized a road show to the United States to showcase technology opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman. The 10-day visit to Seattle and Silicon Valley revolved around a dozen delegates representing Oman's Information Technology Authority (ITA) and the country's eOman initiative, which provides comprehensive eGovernment services throughout the Sultanate. This was the highest-level Omani tech delegation to visit the United States in memory, and the delegates held very successful meetings with U.S. tech companies, government officials, researchers, trade associations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).



ITA Board Members participating in the road show included: H.E. Eng. Ahmed Hassan Al-Dheeb, head of delegation and Undersecretary, Ministry of Commerce & Industry; H.E. Dr. Hammed Salim Al-Rawahi, CEO of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority; H.E.

Tahir Salim Abdullah Al-Amri, Executive President of Oman's Central Bank; Eng. Matar Saif Al-Ma'amri, ITA Board Member; Dr. Salim Sultan Al-Ruzaiqi, CEO of the Information Technology Authority.

**From right to left:** Honorable Cyrus Habib, Lieutenant Governor of the State of Washington; Mr. David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO; H.E. Ahmed Al-Dheeb, head of the ITA delegation and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry; Dr. Salim Al-Ruzaiqi, CEO of the ITA.



The Omani delegation held upwards of 40 meetings with entities in Seattle and Silicon Valley. These included site visits to some of America’s best-known technology companies and research institutions, as well as business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-government (B2G) meetings that took place during workshops and matchmaking sessions with local U.S. companies. Special attention was devoted to the following competencies:

- Artificial intelligence
- Autonomous vehicles
- Blockchain technology
- Cloud services
- Cyber security
- E-commerce
- Energy generation & storage
- Government digitalization
- Logistics & transport
- Networking / IoT / Smart Cities
- Quantum computing
- Virtual & augmented reality



**From left to right:** H.E. Dr. Hammed Salim Al-Rawahi, CEO of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority; Ms. Julie Monahan, Business Development Manager at Washington State Department of Commerce; Ms. Diane Mooney, Director at the U.S. Export Assistance Center Seattle ; Mr. David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO; H.E. Ahmed Al-Dheeb, head of the ITA delegation and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry; Honorable Cyrus Habib, Lieutenant Governor of the State of Washington; Dr. Salim Al-Ruzaiqi, CEO of the ITA; Eng. Matar Saif Al-Ma’amri, ITA Board Member; H.E. Tahir Salim Abdullah Al-Amri, Executive President of Oman’s Central Bank.

Throughout the road show, delegation members were privileged to interact with leading policymakers and business leaders. At the workshop in Seattle, for example, keynote remarks were delivered by the Honorable Cyrus Habib, Lieutenant Governor of the State of Washington, a strong proponent of international relations and global trade. At the workshop in Silicon Valley, keynote remarks were delivered by Matthew Mahood, President & CEO of the Silicon Valley Organization, widely regarded as the region’s flagship business lobby.

Application Security Project (OWASP), Silicon Valley Organization, Tech Wadi, and the Commercial Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

**Local partners in Seattle** included the Commercial Service of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Greater Seattle Partners (GSP), and the Washington State Department of Commerce. **Local partners in Silicon Valley** included the African Technology Foundation, California Chamber of Commerce, Open Web



“The success of this road show would not have been possible without the strong support of our local partners,” noted David Hamod, NUSACC’s President & CEO, who accompanied the delegation throughout the 10-day visit. “Oman may not be the largest market in the region, but the Sultanate certainly knows how to leverage its resources to achieve the best possible results. With that in mind, Oman is rapidly establishing itself as a regional hub for connectivity and e-commerce, and this very impressive delegation captured the interest of U.S. business leaders and policymakers in Washington State and California.”

### Oman: A Strategic Crossroads

Oman’s strategic location connects the Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent, Africa, and the Far East. Straddling some of the world’s most important shipping lanes, the Sultanate provides rapid, easy access to emerging markets with billions of consumers. Connectivity is at the heart of Oman’s growth strategies, transforming the nation into a knowledge-based, digital society that leverages technology to empower individuals, enrich businesses, and enhance government services.



H.E. Ahmed Al-Dheeb, head of the ITA delegation and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

H.E. Ahmed Al-Dheeb, head of the delegation and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, provided welcome remarks in each city and in every meeting. He noted, “Oman’s location, political stability, legislative environment, openness and welcoming nature, the readiness of our national workforce, entrepreneurship, telecom connectivity, and Information & Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure makes our country a main investment hub in the ICT field.”

He went on to say, “The Sultanate’s future economic development vision focuses on diversification of the economy, moving from reliance on oil and gas toward expansion in industry, tourism, logistics, agriculture & fisheries, and mining. Our vision is to rely on emerging and future digital technologies in developing these sectors. This, in turn, creates many opportunities for technology companies to invest and develop services and solutions to serve these economic sectors, extending many years into the future.”

“The Sultanate of Oman has made great strides in business investment, as well as in the information technology sector, in the past few years,” Al-Dheeb continued. “We are ranked #37 globally in starting a business, according to the World Bank’s *Doing Business 2019*, and #12 in tax competitiveness.”

Moreover, he said, “The *Invest Easy* portal of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry provides electronic services to investors, entrepreneurs, and owners of small and medium-sized enterprises through a one-stop shop system. Currently, the portal provides 80 online services to investors and entrepreneurs.”

## SELECT SITE VISITS



Oman is one of the few countries in the Middle East that has signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States, Al-Dheeb pointed out. This improves the bilateral trade and investment climate, he noted, but it also makes Oman attractive as a conduit to other countries in the region.

Taken together, Al-Dheeb concluded, all of these services and global recognition help to “make Oman your best environment for future investments.”

### ITA: Supporting Oman’s Top Development Priorities

Al-Dheeb, in addition to serving as Undersecretary in the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, serves as Deputy Chairman of the ITA Board of Directors. The ITA provides Infrastructure Services, Advisory Services, and Capacity-Building in service to the Sultanate. The ITA supports most of Oman’s top initiatives, including but not limited to the National Broadband Strategy, the Digital Oman Strategy, and the Oman Logistics Strategy.

More details about the ITA’s support of Oman’s top development priorities may be found [here](#).

Since the Internet was introduced in the Sultanate in 1997, the country has seen dramatic gains in access. Oman’s online service index ranks #2 regionally, according to the most recent United Nations eGovernment Survey (2018).



Dr. Salim Al-Ruzaiqi, CEO of the ITA.



Moreover, Oman was ranked #1 in the Middle East and #24 globally among 75 countries in a 2017 Inclusive Internet Index commissioned by Facebook and developed by the Economist Intelligence Unit. The index highlighted the country's infrastructure as a key strength, propelling Oman to #17 of the 75 countries surveyed on the strength of their 4G coverage.

Oman is currently ranked #3 in the world for countries best prepared for cyberattacks, according to the Global Cybersecurity Index. Oman trailed only the USA and Canada, and the Sultanate shared third place with Australia and Malaysia. The index was created by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and ABI Research.

### **An Overview: Oman at 30,000 Feet**

Dr. Salim Al-Ruzaiqi, CEO of the ITA, delivered a keynote speech at each workshop, profiling high-level tech opportunities in Oman. His comprehensive PowerPoint presentation may be accessed [here](#).

Among the highlights of Al-Ruzaiqi's presentation:

- Oman boasts one of the fastest growing populations in the world (8.45 percent as of 2018), ensuring a young and robust consumer market, now and in the years to come.
- Oman experienced GDP growth of 7.3 percent in 2017, the most recent year for which statistics are available. Inflation is low, around one percent.
- Oman is a longstanding partner of the United States, promoting peace and regional stability since 1970 under the leadership of H.M. Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said. The Sultanate is one of only four countries in the Arab world that enjoys a Free Trade Agreement with the United States.
- Despite some turmoil in the Middle East region, Oman is ranked among the Top Ten most secure countries in the world by the World Economic Forum (2017).

Consistent with Oman's current Five-Year Plan (2015 – 2020), Al-Ruzaiqi highlighted three sectors in particular:

**1) Manufacturing** – Importing raw materials & components, then exporting value-added goods.

**2) Information & Communications Technologies** – ICT is a backbone of Oman's digital infrastructure, with 25 percent of college graduates entering the ICT sector.



**3) Transport & Logistics** – Large scale infrastructure is central to Oman’s development plans, including new ports, roads, airports and railways. With close proximity to international shipping lanes, Oman is ideal for warehousing and storage, third party logistics (3PL), cold chain and retail logistics, as well as cargo transportation services.

### More About Promising Tech Sectors

Oman’s coastline stretches nearly 2,000 miles, so **Transport & Logistics** deserves special attention. In recent months, NUSACC hosted a high-level delegation from the Special Economic Zone Authority for Duqm (SEZAD). To access NUSACC’s report on that visit by H.E. Yahya Al Jabri, Chairman of SEZAD, please go [here](#).

Duqm is Oman’s flagship development project, a new city being built along the Arabian Sea that will eventually include a new port, naval base, dry dock, fisheries hub, industrial freezone, hotels, power and desalination plants, a refinery, a 250-kilometer pipeline network from interior oil fields, a liquid jetty, and an oil tank storage terminal.

According to the *Oman Country Commercial Guide*, produced by the U.S. Embassy in Muscat, a “sizeable market exists in the transportation and logistics sectors in Oman with the government focus on economic diversification . . . . Strategic objectives over the past few years have been focused on easing congestion and enhancing capacity by investing in infrastructure and technology for the upgrade of ports, airport facilities, and new road links.”



Omani delegates met with Tesla leaders in Fremont, California (shown here), where Tesla operates an all-electric automobile manufacturing plant.

To access a summary of the *Oman Country Commercial Guide* section on **Multi-Modal Logistics**, please go [here](#).

Another technology-focused sector that is highlighted in the *Oman Country Commercial Guide* is **Healthcare**. Over the past four decades, Oman has invested heavily in the health sector and succeeded in creating an impressive health care system. (Health indicators attest to its comprehensive and well-developed standards.) At the same time, the Government of Oman’s determination to provide all of its citizens with free, basic health care – along with treating persistent diabetes and cardiovascular disease – means that health-related expenditures are growing.

To access a summary of the *Oman Country Commercial Guide* section on **Healthcare**, please go [here](#).



B2G meetings in Seattle.



Delegates visit Amazon Go, a cashier-less grocery store in Seattle.



SAP site visit.

## Seattle, Washington

Seattle – home to some of America’s most iconic companies – has one of the best developed tech ecosystems in the United States. A strong proponent of this start-up ecosystem, the Honorable Cyrus Habib, Lieutenant Governor of Washington State, welcomed the Omani delegates to Seattle.



Honorable Cyrus Habib (right), Lieutenant Governor of the State of Washington, with H.E. Ahmed Al-Dheeb, head of the ITA delegation and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

“The State of Washington prides itself on the respect, friendship, and dignity that it shows its international guests,” said Habib. “This is a State with an international border and an international coastline,” he noted, “and the region’s tech industry reflects this global outlook.” According to Habib, Washington State is America’s largest exporter per capita. (Washington apples are famous around the globe, but so are Amazon, Boeing, and Microsoft.)

Today, in his capacity as Lieutenant Governor, his portfolios include economic development, trade, and higher education. (See “Cyrus Habib, From Braille to Yale” [here](#))

As part of his welcome to the Omani delegates, Habib talked about the trailblazing role that Americans of Arab descent have played in the United States as business leaders, legislators, educators, and cultural icons. “Such entrepreneurial spirit has helped to change the lives of generations of America’s immigrants and refugees,” Habib said, including his own family. (His parents are first generation immigrants to the United States.)

He continued: “The State of Washington embraces diversity, and the people of Washington respect other cultures and traditions. We are all global citizens.”

Diversity applies to commerce as well, he noted. Washington State is famous for its agriculture and natural resources, he suggested, but also for its manufacturing, biotechnology, cleantech, Internet of Things, and e-commerce. “In Washington today,” he concluded, “every industry is a tech industry.”



## Silicon Valley

California's Silicon Valley – the world's quintessential capital for start-ups – is home to some of America's best-known tech companies: Adobe, Apple, Cisco, eBay, Facebook, Google, Intel, Lyft, Netflix, Nvidia, Tesla, and Uber, to name just a few. It is also home to such preeminent research institutions as Berkeley Lab and Stanford University, which hosted the Omani delegation.

The Silicon Valley Organization (SVO), the region's top business advocacy group, served as a partner for the Oman workshop in San Jose, California. Matthew Mahood, President & CEO of SVO, welcomed the Omani delegation to the "Capital of Innovation for the World."

Mahood noted that the region has been "growing and thriving for nearly 70 years, spurred by incredible innovation and entrepreneurship." He cited the "traitorous eight" engineers who left Shockley Semiconductor in the late 1950s to start Fairchild Semiconductor, which later gave birth to Intel Corporation and 90 other companies. Today, said Mahood, these companies are worth over \$2 trillion, more than the GDP of most nations in the world. Those companies, in turn, have given rise to an additional 2,000 tech companies in recent years.



**From left to right:** Mr. David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO; Mr. Matthew Mahood, President & CEO of the SVO; H.E. Ahmed Al-Dheeb, head of the ITA delegation and Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry; Dr. Salim Al-Ruzaiqi, CEO of the ITA.

"Without entrepreneurship, innovation, and risk-taking," he noted, "there would be no Silicon Valley." At the heart of the region, Mahood said, is a "unique ecosystem that combines the intellectual, social, and financial capital that attracts entrepreneurs and risk-takers from all over the world. It is a nurturing and supportive mentor environment, paired with the willingness to financially support these new endeavors at their early stages." This has resulted in a "ripple effect that changed our region," he suggested.

The spirit of Silicon Valley, Mahood said, can be seen in:

- *Patents*, with 13.5 percent of all patents filed in the United States;
- *Investment*, totaling over \$14 billion in 2017, nearly 30 percent of all venture capital in the United States;
- *Education*, with such leading universities as Stanford, Santa Clara, San Jose State, and the University of California at Berkeley.





With an output of nearly \$750 billion, Mahood pointed out, the Bay Area has become the world's 19th largest economy.

Mahood concluded, "It is exciting to be here today with you, the Omanis, and to explore potential partnerships that can further grow the Silicon Valley family tree."

### Oman: The Four S's

David Hamod, NUSACC's President & CEO, provided welcoming remarks throughout the road show. As someone who has visited Oman for decades, Hamod knows the Sultanate very well. In his remarks, he referred to the "four S's" that help to distinguish Oman:

**Stability** – Since 1970, Oman has been ruled by H.M. Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said, who has been revered by his people for nearly five decades. He is the world's third longest-reigning current monarch, after Queen Elizabeth in England and the Sultan of Brunei.

**Security** – Oman is one of the most secure countries in the world, according to the World Economic Forum (2017). The Sultanate enjoys a high quality of life, making it a very attractive location for business leaders and their families.

**Strategic Location** – Oman has been a crossroads for commerce for millennia. It was part of the historic Silk Road and, today, it serves as a bridge to the Middle East, Africa, the Indian Subcontinent, and the Far East. Straddling some of the world's most important shipping lanes, and serving the world from its new international airport in Muscat, the Sultanate provides easy access to billions of consumers in emerging markets.

**"Switzerland"** – Like Switzerland, Hamod said, Oman maintains excellent political and commercial relations with all of its neighbors. The Sultanate's neutral, "open door" foreign policy enables Oman to serve as an intermediary in regional disputes, including delicate hostage negotiations.

"On behalf of the Information Technology Authority, I would like to thank the National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce for organizing this highly successful road show to the United States," concluded Dr. Salim Al-Ruzaiqi, CEO of the ITA. "The ITA has enjoyed working with NUSACC for many years, and we look forward to building on this longstanding partnership in the months ahead."



## LOCAL PARTNERS IN SEATTLE



**GREATER SEATTLE**  
P A R T N E R S



**Department of Commerce**

## LOCAL PARTNERS IN SILICON VALLEY



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To learn more about the benefits of membership in NUSACC, please click [HERE](#).

*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.*

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