



Information Sheet:
Conference on the New Role of the
Private Sector in Development and
Employment

(Rabat/Morocco, 21-23 October 2008)

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Basic Information Sheet

I. Background

The private sector in the Arab world has gone through a stage during which its role in social and economic development was marginal and ineffective. Various elements led the Arab world to this conclusion as governments unilaterally put in place central plans for economic development (State-Directed Economy), and their dependence on the public sector to lead this development.

Arab states and the whole world in general witnessed many changes due to globalization. Therefore, governments face increasing difficulties to fulfill their traditional duties, roles and functions, especially in economic development and employment. States have been involved in economic reform plans, freedom of trade, and privatization programs to redirect national human and material resources to get the maximum benefits of them to realize the targeted development. Thus, emphasizing the role of the private sector has become a priority for economic reform.

Due to over-employment in government institutions and their inability for further employment, the emerging private sector shoulders the main responsibility for employment, and it becomes a fundamental partner to Arab governments in social and economic development.

Despite Arab governments' legislative, financial, investment facilities and incentives to the private sector, this emerging sector still face various challenges and problems that pose obstacles in its way to achieve social, economic and development responsibilities. Some reasons could be traced back to disadvantages inherited from older

eras and laws restricting the role of the private sector and absence of the flexibility needed for development. Reasons also include the introduction of the GATT and liberating trade, subsequent fierce competition between national and foreign private sector institutions, lifting state-protection for the private sector and the decrease of government subsidies for it. This helped incapacitating the emerging private sector to shoulder its responsibilities regarding employment and driving development engine.

Taking in consideration the major challenges the Arab World face, specially unemployment, poverty, deterioration of living standards and the disparity between education & training output on one hand and labor market needs on the other. In response to these challenges, the Arab Summit, in its 19 session held in Riyadh, has approved holding an economic, development and social Arab summit.

The ministerial committee preparing for the conference approves the priority of supporting the role of the private sector in the proposals submitted to the summit.

Within the framework of Arab cooperation, and within the context of the ALO role towards supporting social partners in the Arab world as well as previous experiences in this field, the ALO has decided to hold a conference on the new role of the private sector in development and employment in Morocco the period 21-23 October 2008, in cooperation with Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization and the government of Morocco, in collaboration with the League of Arab States (economic sector) the UNIFEM and the participation of Arab and international relevant organizations. A group of efficient Arab experts and national professionals were selected for the conference.

The conference discusses issues relevant to the private sector and the new role attached to it to help in boosting development and employment, eradicating obstacles to achieve these goals, and

present the conference recommendations to Arab decision makers and help them formulate national policies and strategies that would help in supporting the private sector to shoulder its responsibilities.

The conference also comes as a link in a chain of meetings and conferences the ALO shall hold to present their outcomes to the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit in regard of challenges of poverty and unemployment.

II. The Conference Main Objectives:

- 1- Presenting responsibilities and the new role of the private sector in the context of social and economic changes posed by globalization.
- 2- Discussing challenges faced by the private sector, obstacles in the road of development and employment as well as means needed to face them.
- 3- The role to be played by the private sector for human development and means to match education and training outputs with labor market needs.
- 4- Shedding light on and supporting Arab interactive integration regarding development of the private sector.
- 5- Tackling economic contribution of Arab women and how some female employers' organizations support employment, especially for woman.
- 6- Setting a framework for local and national policies that may support the efficiency of the private sector and its role in social and economic development, especially in employment.
- 7- Review of experiences to support employment in the Arab and international levels and evaluating practices of key businesses to enhance initiatives of employment.

- 8- Presenting outcomes of this and further conferences to the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit while discussing challenges of poverty and unemployment.

III. The Conference Main Themes:

- 1- Role of the private sector in development,
- 2- Role of the private sector in supporting employment and developing human resources,
- 3- Framework of policies supporting the role of the private sector in social development,
- 4- Interactive relation between the private sector and Arab integration,
- 5- Contributions of major businesses in employment programs,
- 6- Role of female employers' organizations in development and the increase of woman's participation in economic activity, and
- 7- Free trade agreements and their effects on gender.

III. Participants:

- 1- Arab ministries of labor, trade and industry,
- 2- Arab Investment Authorities,
- 3- National and Arab organizations representing the private sector, including Arab employers' organizations as well as Arab and regional organizations of employers and investors,
- 4- Organizations of common Arab works, like the Arab League, specialist Arab organizations and relevant Arab unions,
- 5- Relevant regional and international organizations like: The World Bank, EU, OECD, UNDP, ILO, UNIDO and ESCWA.

- 6- National, regional and international development funds,
- 7- Regional and international projects in the Arab region, relevant to the private sector and human development,
- 8- Senior Arab businessmen,
- 9- Arab Trade Union,
- 10- General Union of Arab Chambers of Trade, Industry and Agricultural,
- 11- Arab professional unions,
- 12- Arab union for handicraft and traditional industries,
- 13- Islamic Development bank,
- 14- Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development,
- 15- Arab institution for investment,
- 16- Selatek institution,
- 17- Qatar institution for science and technology,
- 18- Arab institution for science and technology in Sharja,
- 19- The Gulf organization for industrial consultations,
- 20- The Gulf Cooperation Council,
- 21- The executive office of GCC labor ministers, and
- 22- Arab economic development bank in Africa

IV. The Conference Formalities:

1- Sponsor

The conference is sponsored by His Majesty King Mohamed VI.

2- Head of the conference:

The conference is headed by H.E. Mr. Gamal Aghmany, Minister of employment and vocational training in Morocco, and two deputies, one of which represents the government participants and the other represents the private sector.

3- Registration

Registration forms will be dispersed to all participants before the opening session; all the conference participants should complete the registration form, and specify the workshop of their concern.

4- Conference work papers

Efficient Arab experts present conference work papers covering the conference various themes while participants present country work papers to review national experiences on the role of the private sector in economic and social development. Meanwhile participant international organization present different work papers covering themes of the conference.

5- Conference proceedings

The conference has four sessions in 21 and 22 October 2008, and two workshops will be held each will discuss specific issues

The General Sessions:

- 1- Role of the private sector in development: The Moroccan experience as a model
- 2- Role of the private sector in supporting employment and developing human resources,
- 3- Contributions of major businesses in employment development

programs,

- 4- Framework of policies supporting the role of the private sector in social development,

The first workshop:

- 1- Interactive relation between the private sector and Arab integration,

The second workshop:

- 1- Role of female employers' organizations in development and the increase of woman's participation in economic activity, and
- 2- Free trade agreements and their effects on gender.

A keynote speaker and two or three commentators shall be assigned to each session and then the session shall be open for discussion. The conference last day, Thursday 23rd October 2008, shall be dedicated to discuss the final reports of the general sessions and the two workshops to conclude the final report and recommendations of the conference.

6- Contacts

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