



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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+1 (202) 289-5920
info@nusacc.org

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U.S. – ARAB CHAMBER NAMES MOROCCAN DIPLOMAT “AMBASSADOR OF THE YEAR”

*On 10th Anniversary of This Award,
H.E. Rashad Bouhlal is First Moroccan Recipient*

*Governor of Delaware: “Moroccan Ambassador
Has Helped to Build a Commercial Bridge” to the USA*

Washington, DC – The National U.S. - Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) this week named H.E. Rachad Bouhlal, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco, as the 2014 "Ambassador of the Year." Upwards of 200 business and government leaders participated in the luncheon and awards ceremony at the Willard InterContinental Hotel in Washington,

DC. NUSACC began its “Ambassador of the Year” recognition ceremonies ten years ago, and Ambassador Bouhlal is the first Moroccan to receive this prestigious award.



H.E. Rachad Bouhlal (center) receives "Ambassador of the Year" award from David Hamod, President & CEO of NUSACC (right) and Hon. Jack Markell, Governor of the State of Delaware (left).

Some of the VIPs attending the event included: Hon. Jack Markell, Governor of the State of Delaware, who traveled to the nation’s capital for the award ceremony; H.E. Mehdi Bensaid, member of the Moroccan Parliament and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee; Hon. Ken Hyatt, Deputy Under Secretary of Commerce, who led a delegation last week to Morocco; and Hon. Gerald Feierstein, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State. The U.S. Ambassador to Morocco, Hon.



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Dwight Bush, wired congratulations from Rabat, and three former U.S. Ambassadors to Morocco – Hon. Ed Gabriel, Hon. Marc Ginsberg, and Hon. Michael Ussery – participated in the luncheon.

“I am truly humbled and honored to receive this award from the National U.S.- Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC),” said H.E. Rachad Bouhlal, Morocco’s Ambassador. “This is a recognition of the longstanding relations between our two nations, as well as our growing partnership, consistent with the economic vision of H.M. King Mohammed VI. I want to thank everyone at NUSACC for the wonderful work that they are doing to build stronger commercial and economic bridges between the United States and the Arab world.”

“This has been a remarkable year for Morocco – U.S. relations in all their parts,” noted David Hamod, President & CEO of the National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce. “Ambassador Bouhlal has been at the forefront of this heightened level of activity, criss-crossing the United States to deliver Morocco’s message of economic opportunity. To date, he has visited half of America’s 50 states, and he’s just hitting his stride.”

This theme was amplified by Hon. Jack Markell, Governor of Delaware. “Ambassador Bouhlal has figured out how important it is to get out of Washington and to visit States all across the country,” he said. “I am very pleased with the close relationship that he has developed with the Port of Wilmington, which has opened the door to greater opportunities and has helped to build a commercial bridge between the people of Delaware and the people of Morocco.”



Hon. Jack Markell, Governor of the State of Delaware: “Ambassador Bouhlal has figured out how important it is to get out of Washington and to visit States all across the country.”

Last year, for example, the Port of Wilmington reached an unprecedented five-year agreement with Fresh Fruit Maroc, a Moroccan association of citrus growers and exporters, which will ensure that Delaware continues to be the North American distribution hub for the Moroccans’ clementines through 2017.

Hon. Ken Hyatt, Deputy Under Secretary of Commerce, has just returned from Morocco, to which he led a U.S. commercial delegation. “There are significant opportunities for U.S. companies in Morocco and also to use Morocco as a hub to French-speaking Africa,” he



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noted. "The United States and Morocco enjoy extremely close business ties with a long history, and I am optimistic about the future of U.S. – Morocco commercial relations." Hyatt was also a speaker at the recent [U.S. – Morocco Trade & Investment Forum](#), held in Dallas, Texas.



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Ambassador Gerry Feierstein, representing the U.S. Department of State, noted, "Ambassador Bouhlal has done an outstanding job of promoting U.S. – Moroccan engagement at a time of considerable turmoil and transformation in the region." During the Moroccan Ambassador's tenure, Feierstein suggested, the "U.S. relationship with Morocco, already deep and broad, has been further strengthened due in large part to the Ambassador's efforts, as well as those of diplomats from both countries working diligently to foster mutual cooperation and goodwill."

"Morocco is one of our closest counterterrorism partners in the region," Feierstein mentioned, and the Kingdom plays a leading role in promoting regional stability, encouraging economic growth, supporting democratic reform efforts, countering violent extremism, and strengthening cultural ties."

"A diplomat's job can be boiled down to two fundamental tasks: to advocate your nation's interests to your host government, and to explain your host country to policymakers back home," Feierstein concluded. "Rachad Bouhlal handles both tasks impressively. It would be hard to imagine a more effective advocate for Morocco than Ambassador Bouhlal."



Hon. Gerald Feierstein, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State: "It would be hard to imagine a more effective advocate for Morocco than Ambassador Bouhlal."

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The Chamber's David Hamod identified some of the highlights that have marked Ambassador Bouhlal's efforts to promote the Morocco – U.S. relationship in 2014:

- Leading regular delegations of politicians, educators, and business leaders to Morocco throughout the year;
- Playing a leading role in organizing the [Morocco – U.S. Business Development Conference](#), held in Rabat in March 2014;
- Promoting the U.S. – Morocco Strategic Dialogue, held in Morocco in April and led on the American side by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry;
- Participating in the annual meeting of the [National Governors Association](#) in July, in which Amb. Bouhlal built relationships with U.S. Governors;
- Supporting the [Global Entrepreneurship Summit](#) in Marrakesh last month, an event that drew 6,800 participants from 50 nations.



H.E. Rachad Bouhlal, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco: "This is a recognition of the longstanding relations between our two nations, as well as our growing partnership, consistent with the economic vision of H.M. King Mohammed VI."

Picking up on this economic theme, Amb. Bouhlal noted, "Our relations with the United States started 237 years ago – in December 1777 – when Sultan Mohamed Ben Abdellah initiated trade relations with the new Republic of the United States. I have tried to strengthen these relations by putting economic issues at the top of our priorities of the Strategic Dialogue, which was launched in 2012."

He continued, "In the last few months, important American companies have decided to invest

in Morocco: Chevron, Ford, General Electric, Boeing, and MoneyGram, to name just a few.



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They are attracted by such features as political stability, an open economy, education and training, and no risk of expropriation.”

He also highlighted the important role of the U.S. – Morocco Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which was signed in 2004. According to National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce research extrapolated from U.S. Census Bureau data, Moroccan exports to the United States have grown 9 percent annually over a five-year period and 12 percent annually over a ten-year period. In the same vein, U.S. exports to Morocco have grown 12 percent annually over a five-year period and 20 percent annually over a ten-year period.



VIPs in attendance at the Award Luncheon included (front row, left to right:) H.E. Mehdi Bensaid, Moroccan Parliament member & Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee; Ambassador Ed Gabriel, former U.S. Ambassador to Morocco, representing Jacobs; H.E. Rachad Bouhlal, Moroccan Ambassador; David Hamod, NUSACC President & CEO; Steve Trachtenberg, former President of George Washington University; Hon. Ken Hyatt, Deputy Under Secretary of Commerce; Hon. Marc Ginsberg, former U.S. Ambassador to Morocco.

Back Row, left to right: Barton Roper, GA-ASI; Amin Salam, NUSACC VP of Business Development; Hon. Gerald Feierstein, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State; Amb. Michael Ussery, former U.S. Ambassador to Morocco; Abdelhamid Khalil, Vice President of Americas for Royal Air Maroc; and William Hayes, Senior Vice President of Kosmos.



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Morocco has been building strong economic relationships with Africa, Amb. Bouhlal noted. “Casablanca is now connected to 27 capital cities in Africa, and it is clear that Morocco can be the gateway for American companies to Africa. Morocco is the second largest African investor in the continent of Africa and the largest African recipient of Foreign Direct Investment in 2013,” he said.

The ambassador quoted H.M. King Mohammed VI: “During the meeting I had with President Obama last November, we managed to give strong impetus to our partnership. The results are starting to show, be it with respect to our bilateral relations, or the similarity of views regarding regional and international issues of common concern, especially those relating to development and security in Africa.”

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Hon. Dwight Bush, U.S. Ambassador to Morocco: “Ambassador Bouhlal represents the best of the diplomatic craft. He is a consummate professional, a wise advisor, and a reasoned and responsible advocate for his country.”

The U.S. Ambassador to Morocco, the Honorable Dwight Bush, sent a congratulatory note from Rabat. “After I was nominated to be the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco,” he suggested, Ambassador Bouhlal “made himself available to me immediately, he understood the value of our longstanding bilateral relationship, and he spoke with me sincerely about the things that he thought would merit our mutual attention.”

The U.S. diplomat concluded, “Ambassador Bouhlal represents the best of the diplomatic craft. He is a consummate professional, a wise advisor, and a reasoned and responsible advocate for his country.”

Jim Falk, Morocco’s Honorary Consul in the State of Texas, sounded a similar theme. “Frequently, I have had the pleasure of observing Ambassador Bouhlal charm audiences with his profound knowledge of the Middle East, Europe and the United States, which he uses very effectively to advance his country’s interests and the very special relationship



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that has existed for over two centuries between the United States and the Kingdom of Morocco.”

Three Honorary Consuls contributed remarks to the luncheon: Hon. Nancy Lampton of Kentucky, Hon. Marilyn Diamond of Illinois, and Hon. Jim Falk of Texas.

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This is the tenth anniversary of NUSACC’s “Ambassador of the Year Award,” which began in 2004. Previous recipients have come from Egypt, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates. This award, the only one of its kind, recognizes Arab ambassadors for their outstanding service in support of U.S. – Arab commercial relations.

Sponsors of the awards luncheon included four companies that have played an instrumental role in promoting the U.S. – Morocco commercial relationship: General Atomics, Jacobs, Kosmos, and Royal Air Maroc, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Morocco. The National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce thanks these sponsors, whose generous financial support made the awards luncheon possible.

Deputy Under Secretary of Commerce Ken Hyatt, in his concluding remarks, characterized the U.S. – Morocco relationship as one of openness, opportunity and optimism. “We have a great history in our relationship, Mr. Ambassador, and I continue to look forward to working with you.”

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.