



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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U.S. – Morocco Trade & Investment Forum in Dallas Attracts Hundreds of U.S. Executives

*High-Level Event Features
Two Ministers and Two Ambassadors*

*NUSACC Offices in Houston and Washington DC
Play “Enormously Helpful” Role in the Forum’s Success*

Dallas, Texas – The National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) recently supported a visit to Dallas, Texas by a high-level delegation of Moroccan and U.S. Government officials participating in the U.S. - Morocco Trade & Investment Forum. More than 200 U.S. executives turned out for the Forum, which was spearheaded by Morocco’s Honorary Consul in Texas, Jim Falk, and promoted by NUSACC’s Houston office, headed by Director Jamal Bafagih.

The delegation was led by H.E. Aziz Rabbah – Morocco’s Minister for Equipment,



Transportation and Logistics – and H.E. Mamoune Bouhdoud (second from right), Minister for SMEs. Also pictured: Moroccan Ambassador Rachad Bouhlal (right) and U.S. Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (middle).

and H.E. Mamoune Bouhdoud, Morocco’s Minister for Small and Medium Enterprises. Delegates included Amina Benkhadra, CEO of National Hydrocarbons & Mining, Zouhair El Aoufir, CEO of Moroccan National Airports Authority, and several others. To underscore the importance of the visiting delegation, Forum VIPs included H.E. Rachad Bouhlal, Morocco’s Ambassador to the United States, and Hon. Dwight L. Bush Sr., U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco.



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“The National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce was pleased to serve as an Organizing Partner of this event, which comes on the heels of NUSACC’s promotion of the Morocco – U.S. Business Development Conference held in Rabat earlier this year,” noted David Hamod, the Chamber’s President & CEO. “We are very grateful to the Embassy of Morocco and the World Affairs Council in Dallas/Fort Worth, led by Jim Falk, for giving us an opportunity to help promote the U.S. – Morocco commercial relationship.” Falk noted, “We are also very grateful to our corporate underwriters and partner organizations, especially the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce in Houston, whose support was enormously helpful in making the event a success.”



Honorary Consul Jim Falk (center) and his colleagues at the World Affairs Council in Dallas/Fort Worth, which organized the U.S.-Morocco Trade and Investment Forum, are joined by H.E. Aziz Rabbah, Morocco’s Minister for Equipment, Transportation and Logistics (fourth from right).

Welcome Dinner at the Dallas Museum of Art



To set the stage for the Trade & Investment Forum, a dinner was held the night before the launch. Hosted jointly by Ambassador Rachad Bouhlal and Honorary Consul Jim Falk, the dinner was held at the beautiful Dallas Museum of Art, renowned for its award-winning educational programs.

The Honorable Vonciel Jones Hill, Councilwoman from Dallas District 3, represented the City of Dallas at the dinner. About the high-level event, she noted, “I was honored to attend the event at the Dallas Museum of Art, and I welcomed and appreciated meeting with the esteemed guests from the Kingdom of Morocco. I also greatly enjoyed the presentation of Islamic art by the Museum.”

Councilwoman Hill went on to say, “I am pleased that we have groups such as the World Affairs Council in Dallas/Fort Worth working tirelessly to bring important visitors to our city. I am most grateful to the World Affairs Council and the National U.S. - Arab Chamber



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of Commerce for organizing such a successful event." She concluded, "The Dallas regional business community offers tremendous opportunities for our Moroccan visitors."

Low operating costs, easy access to markets, and a highly skilled workforce make Dallas a very attractive location to reach American customers and promote international business. More than 250 corporate headquarters and 20 *Fortune* 500 companies are located within the metropolitan area. A quarter of Dallas is foreign born, and this international city is among the nation's leaders in health care, education, and recreation.

During dinner, attendees were treated to an impressive presentation by the Dallas Museum of Art that highlighted a recent long-term loan of Islamic artifacts. Assembled over the course of five decades by the noted art collector Edmund de Unger (1918–2011), the Keir Collection is recognized by scholars as one of the world's most geographically and historically comprehensive collection of Islamic art, encompassing almost 2,000 works in a range of media that span thirteen centuries of Islamic art-making.

Trade & Investment Forum

At the Trade & Investment Forum on Friday, October 16, opening remarks were provided by The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Member of the U.S. Congress representing the 30th District. She said, "I would like to thank the World Affairs Council of Dallas/Fort Worth and the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce for helping to organize this important gathering with an important commercial partner such as the United States."



The Forum's morning panel discussion focused on doing business in Morocco. Pictured (left to right): Danielle Walker, Director, Africa Business Initiative, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Bill Birkhofer, Executive Vice President, Jacobs Engineering; Adil Chikhi, Business Development Director, Moroccan Investment Development Agency; and Walter Siouffi, Managing Director for Citi in Morocco, Tunisia and Libya.



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Following remarks by Congresswoman Johnson, the two sitting ambassadors offered their perspectives on the state of Morocco – U.S. commercial relations. Ambassador Bouhlal highlighted Morocco's strategic position as a gateway to multiple markets, especially Sub Saharan Africa. He also drew attention to the economic reforms that the Kingdom of Morocco has implemented in recent years. For example, H.M. King Mohammed VI enacted judicial and administrative reforms in 2014 to combat corruption and further improve the country's business climate. The National Human Development Initiative has provided job training to thousands of rural Moroccans since 2005, and the Initiative continues to promote economic growth through the development of the Kingdom's skilled workforce.



H.E. Aziz Rabbah
Moroccan Minister
for Equipment,
Transportation, and
Logistics



**H.E. Mamoune
Bouhdoud**
Moroccan Minister for
Small & Medium Sized
Enterprises



**Hon. Dwight L.
Bush, Sr.**
U.S. Ambassador to the
Kingdom of Morocco



H.E. Rachad Bouhlal
Moroccan Ambassador
to the United States



Hon. Mike Rawlings
Mayor of Dallas



Hon. Jim Falk
Honorary Consul to
the Kingdom of
Morocco in Texas



**Hon. Eddie Bernice
Johnson**
U.S. Congresswoman



Jamal Bafagih
NUSACC Director in
Houston



For his part, Ambassador Bush paid tribute to the vision of H.M. King Mohammed VI. He noted, “King Mohammed VI has led Morocco to establish itself as a hub for regional and global markets.” Further, Ambassador Bush said, “I commend the quality of the mutually beneficial business partnership and cooperation between our two countries, noting that the relationship between the two countries dates back to 1776, when the Kingdom of Morocco became the first country to recognize the independence of the United States of America.”



Hon. Dwight L. Bush, Sr., U.S. Ambassador to Morocco (left) with World Affairs Council Exec VP, Beth Huddlestone (Co-Organizer of the Forum, center) and H.E. Rachad Bouhlal, Moroccan Ambassador to the United States (right).

H.E. Aziz Rabbah, Morocco’s Minister for Equipment, Transportation, and Logistics, also emphasized the long and symbiotic relationship between the two nations. He said, “It is my honor and pleasure to be with you here today in Dallas. We in the Kingdom of Morocco hope that the successful relationship between the United States and Morocco that has lasted for over two hundred years will continue to grow in different areas, including commerce.” Minister Rabbah encouraged U.S. firms to engage

with the Moroccan delegation to find areas of common interest that might lead to business opportunities for both parties.

The Kingdom of Morocco has long been considered a major commercial bridge linking Europe and Africa, and the Kingdom has negotiated trade agreements and invested billions of dollars in infrastructure over the past decade to strengthen this position. This includes a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States, the first FTA of its kind in North Africa, which went into effect in 2006.

By 2015, Morocco plans to invest an additional \$15 billion to upgrade its infrastructure. Morocco also recently unveiled a plan to invest \$25 billion in environmental solutions projects over the next 15 years. The Kingdom of Morocco offers impressive opportunities for U.S. firms, especially in construction, mining equipment, building materials, as well as engineering and architectural consulting.



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The Honorable Mike Rawlings, Mayor of Dallas, described himself as a “fan of Morocco,” recounting that he spent some memorable days and nights in that country. He went on to thank the esteemed delegation for giving the City of Dallas an opportunity to host one of Morocco’s most important public / private delegations ever to visit the United States.

In the presence of the assembled dignitaries, Mr. Sean Donahue, CEO of Dallas Fort Worth International Airport, and Mr. Zouhair El Aoufir, CEO of Moroccan National Airports Authority, signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the two entities to enhance training and marketing collaboration. The Memorandum will build momentum for additional business and economic cooperation between the U.S. and Morocco, according to the delegation.

"This Memorandum of Understanding, along with the Memoranda of Understanding with both the Dallas Regional Chamber and the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce, are important first steps towards increasing connectivity and trade," said Honorary Consul Jim Falk. Gifts were also exchanged between the two parties, signaling the symbolic beginning of a strong relationship between the two aviation authorities.



The keynote address was delivered by H.E. Mamoune Bouhdoud, Morocco's Minister for Small & Medium Sized Enterprises. NUSACC's Director in Houston, Jamal Bafagih, was privileged to introduce Minister Bouhdoud. Bafagih said, “I would like to congratulate the honorable guests from Morocco and the City of Dallas for this remarkable relationship. It is exactly these types of relationships that the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce strives to build on a daily basis on behalf of our partners and members in the MENA region and the United States.” He concluded, “Your Excellency, we are all fully aware of how important your role is to your country, a very important part of the region’s economy, and your role as Minister for SMEs is more critical than ever.”

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Sean Donahue (left), CEO of DFW International Airport, and Zouhair El Aoufir, CEO of Morocco National Airports Authority.



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Minister Bouhdoud highlighted growing areas of opportunity in Morocco for U.S. companies, including but not limited to agriculture, finance, infrastructure, and tourism. Minister Bouhdoud praised the longstanding and thriving commercial relationship between the United States and the Kingdom of Morocco. “Hundreds of American companies are conducting business in Morocco very successfully,” he said, “and there are opportunities for much more.”

Recent reforms in the Kingdom of Morocco will likely generate increased international business and foreign direct investment. Morocco has eliminated the minimum capital requirement for limited liability companies to do business in the country. That nation has also streamlined the procedural process to start a business, pay taxes, get credit, and trade across borders. These initiatives signal H.M. King Mohammed VI’s commitment to promote the Kingdom of Morocco as a key business gateway to the United States, Europe, and Africa.

By the year 2020, according to research conducted by the National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce, exports of U.S. goods and services to Morocco are on track to grow to \$10.44 billion, up from estimated exports of \$3.42 billion in 2014.

Later in the Forum, Breakout Sessions focused on such topics as energy, aeronautics and manufacturing, finance, as well as infrastructure and logistics. Panelists included senior U.S. and Moroccan government officials, including: Mr. Younes Tazi, Director General of the Moroccan Agency for Development of Logistics; Mr. Tarek Hamane, Director of Projects,

Morocco National Office of Electricity & Water; Mr. Adil Chikhi, Director of Business Development, Morocco Investment Development Agency.



The Honorable Kenneth E. Hyatt, Deputy Undersecretary for International Trade at the U.S. Department of Commerce, delivered closing remarks at the Forum.

The closing remarks at the forum were given by The Honorable Kenneth E. Hyatt, Deputy Undersecretary for International Trade at the U.S. Department of Commerce. Mr. Hyatt concluded the event by thanking the organizers and participants for recognizing the great potential U.S. - Morocco commercial relations hold for interested U.S. companies. He also announced that he would be leading a trade mission to Morocco in early December.



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“The meeting here in Dallas marked a new beginning for the Texas – Morocco commercial relationship,” noted Radi Al-Rashed, President of International Chem-Crete – based in the Dallas area – and a former Chairman of the North Texas District Export Council. “In the past, Morocco dealt primarily with European countries, and the Morocco – U.S. Free Trade Agreement has begun to change that equation. Morocco’s political stability, along with the Kingdom’s access to African markets, makes Morocco an ideal partner for Texas companies like ours.”

Noted Honorary Consul Jim Falk, "Ambassador Bouhlal and I wanted the Forum to be one where Moroccan and U.S. business leaders would have opportunities to exchange information and discuss new opportunities, thus the principal reason for having this meeting outside of DC or Rabat. We are particularly pleased that the Forum, which attracted over 80 companies, included many who have strong success stories from being already established in Morocco, as well as many who were hearing for the first time about the Kingdom’s particular strengths."

Falk concluded, "The government and business leaders who came from Morocco were struck by the size and diversity of the Texas economy, and they learned how our State, much like Morocco, is a 'Gateway' to expanded markets."

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.