



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 2, 2018  
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## U.S. – ARAB CHAMBER ROUNDTABLE HIGHLIGHTS OPPORTUNITIES IN DUQM, OMAN’S LATEST INVESTMENT DESTINATION

***New Multimodal Logistics Hub Offers “State-of-the-Art Infrastructure Services”***  
– H.E. Yahya Said Al Jabri, Chairman of Duqm Special Economic Zone

***“This is a Long-Term Investment by the Oman Government  
to Serve as Major Global Maritime Trade Players Far into the Future”***  
– Hon. David Short, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Transportation

**Washington D.C.** –The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) recently hosted an Expert Roundtable dedicated to the Special Economic Zone Authority of Duqm (SEZAD), a 2,000-square kilometer port along the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean in the Sultanate of Oman. The standing-room-only event attracted more than 30 U.S. companies in such sectors as logistics, oil and gas, tourism, construction and engineering, architecture and design, transportation, and security.

A high-level delegation from Oman, led by H.E. Yahya Said Al Jabri, Chairman of SEZAD, made presentations about “big ticket” opportunities in Duqm. The Embassy of Oman was represented by Her Excellency Hunaina Al Mughairy, Oman’s Ambassador to the United States, with welcoming remarks offered by the Honorable David Short, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Aviation & International Affairs.



**From left to right:** Dr. Ismail Al Balushi, Deputy CEO at SEZAD; H.E. Hunaina Al Mughairy, Oman’s Ambassador to the United States; Mr. Rabih Mogharbel, NUSACC’s Vice President for Business Development; H.E. Yahya Said Al Jabri, Chairman of Duqm Special Economic Zone; The Honorable David Short, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Aviation & International Affairs; Mr. Saleh Al Hasni, General Manager of Investment at SEZAD; Mr. Hilal Al Kharusi, Executive Managing Director at Oman Oil Duqm Development Company; Mr. Haitham Al Tai, General Manager of Finance and Administration at Oman Dry Dock.



Executives from more than 30 U.S. companies attended the Roundtable, including such sectors as logistics, oil & gas, tourism, construction & engineering, architecture & design, transportation, and security.

Moderators included Dr. John Brennan, a Worldwide Public Sector Senior Manager at Amazon Web Services (AWS), as well as Mr. Rabih Mogharbel, NUSACC's Vice President for Business Development. The Lead Sponsor for the Roundtable was Virginia Beach DigiPorts LLC, the exclusive North American developer for NxtVn, a Platinum Plus member of NUSACC.

“A multimodal hub like Duqm is all about supply chains and ‘location, location, location,’” stated David Hamod, NUSACC's President & CEO. “Few facilities in the MENA region can match the strategic location of Duqm, and this will be increasingly evident in the decade to come.” NUSACC was the first entity in the United States to lead a business delegation to Duqm.



### Moving to the Global Stage

Oman's strategic location at the crossroads of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East provides access to over three billion potential consumers in some of the fastest growing markets in the world. This strategic positioning is enhanced by Oman's Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States, signed in 2006, one of only four such FTAs in the Arab world.

**From left to right:** H.E. Yahya Said Al Jabri, Chairman of SEZAD; The Honorable David Short, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Aviation & International Affairs; H.E. Hunaina Al Mughairy, Oman's Ambassador to the United States; Dr. John Brennan, a Worldwide Public Sector Senior Manager at Amazon Web Services (AWS).

Under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said, Oman has made numerous strategic investments that distinguish the Sultanate as an important regional player. With the advent of Duqm and plans for a GCC Rail system, which will serve the Arabian Gulf and beyond, Oman is now taking that strategic vision to the next level to become a truly global player.



Deputy Assistant Secretary David Short, in his welcoming remarks, recognized Oman’s move to the world stage. “The quality infrastructure projects at Duqm,” he noted, “represent a long-term investment by the Oman Government to serve as major global maritime trade players far into the future.” He highlighted the excellent relationship that the United States enjoys with the Sultanate, built on ties that stretch back to 1833 with the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce, one of America’s first commercial treaties with any nation.

Short went on to say that Duqm “supports economic development and diversification, and a successful Oman increases the likelihood of regional stability.” He then introduced H.E. Yahya Al Jabri, Chairman of SEZAD.

### **Oman: Investing for the Long Term**

In his opening remarks, Al Jabri thanked NUSACC for its longstanding efforts to help introduce the Duqm project to the U.S. business community. “We are grateful to NUSACC for its continuous efforts in promoting, supporting, and strengthening U.S. - Arab business and economic cooperation,” he noted. “Today’s gathering is a real opportunity for me and my team to showcase the exceptional business environment at Duqm. This Roundtable provides a valuable venue for longstanding business relationships, mutual friendships, and numerous platforms around economy and trade.”



H.E. Yahya Said Al Jabri, Chairman of SEZAD.

In a nutshell, Al Jabri said, Duqm offers “state-of-the-art infrastructure services, a business-friendly environment, and a commercial entry point to Oman and beyond.” The Special Economic Zone at Duqm is considered the largest of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa and one of the biggest in the world.

Al Jabri highlighted Oman’s efforts to expand and diversify its economic base in recent decades through successive Development Plans revolving around infrastructure projects in roads, water, electricity, ports, and airports.

The country’s political and economic stability, he said, offers vital incentives and motivation for global investors, representing the cornerstone of Oman’s vision to attract global businesses. These include but are not limited to the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, as well as Oman’s Free Zones in Salalah and Sohar and the country’s Industrial Estates (manufacturing bases) in close proximity to the Sultanate’s seaports and airports.



Duqm, “The Future of Growth” in Oman.

Duqm, Oman’s flagship economic development project, is intended to: (1) Further expand and diversify the economic base of the country beyond the oil sector; (2) Encourage stronger participation by the private sector in the nation’s economy through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Domestic Inward Investment; (3) Achieve equitable socio-economic development across all regions of the Sultanate. As such, Al Jabri said, Duqm is serving as an engine of economic growth in the Al Wusta region of Oman.

The “hybrid” nature of SEZAD allows for multi-sectoral development: Logistics services (like Oman’s Free Zones), manufacturing (for exports or local markets, like Oman’s Industrial Estates), and the incorporation of tourism and hospitality services. SEZAD also provides opportunities for Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in the form of large infrastructure projects like Duqm’s seaport, dry-dock facility, power plant, and industrial estates.

The population of Duqm, as a “City on the Sea,” is expected to grow to 67,000 persons by 2025. As such, Al Jabri said, the Duqm development model provides for a local government that is proactive, transparent, responsive, and committed to maintaining a business-friendly regulatory environment.

### **Duqm Partnerships and Commercial Incentives**

Al Jabri then turned the floor over to subject matter specialists in his delegation, who made presentations covering their respective areas of expertise. (These presentations are accessible through hyperlinks, below.)



[Mr. Saleh Al Hasni, General Manager of Investment, SEZAD](#)

Mr. Saleh Al Hasni (standing), General Manager of Investment at SEZAD, presenting investment opportunities in Duqm.

[Mr. Hilal Al Kharusi, Executive Managing Director, Oman Oil Duqm Development Company](#)

[Mr. Haitham Al Tai, General Manager of Finance and Administration, Oman Dry Dock](#)

[Ms. Haura Al Wahibi, Commercial Attaché and representative of Ithraa \(Oman’s Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development\)](#)

Oman enjoys relationships with over 140 countries, including all of its neighbors in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). With 90 kilometers of coastline, Duqm is able to leverage its access to the Indian Ocean and beyond. The Oman Dry Dock Company, for example, offers onshore and offshore ship repair and conversions, industrial steel fabrications, and repair and maintenance of cruise ships. In addition, because of the Dry Dock’s size and economies of scale, that company is able to rent out space to other industries to help stimulate the local economy.



Oman was the first nation in the GCC to create a Ministry of the Environment, in 2007, reflecting His Majesty the Sultan's commitment to environmental protection. This commitment carries over to Duqm which, under the able leadership of Chairman Al Jabri, is on track to grow sustainably.

Duqm, as a Special Economic Zone, is able to provide a variety of incentives to prospective investors. For example, corporations are not required to pay tax when doing business in Duqm. And if these are U.S. companies, they may enjoy 100 percent foreign ownership. Investors may also qualify for a five-year tax holiday and, when renting land, foreign companies may enjoy a lease period of up to 50 years. They may also receive exemptions from import and export duties, with no minimum capital requirement.

### Concluding Remarks

Her Excellency Hunaina Al Mughairy, Oman's Ambassador to the United States, participated in the Roundtable. She noted, "Duqm is a signature project of the Sultanate of Oman, serving as a bridge to the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and beyond. As such, this Special Economic Zone should be especially attractive to U.S. companies that are looking to establish a presence in one of the most sophisticated multi-modal logistics hubs in the region." She concluded, "I would like to thank NUSACC for organizing this Roundtable and, as always, helping Oman to create partnerships with the American business community."

The Roundtable was sponsored by NxtVn Holding, a Platinum Plus member of NUSACC, and Virginia Beach DigiPorts. Lewis Shadle, Managing Director, noted, "Kudos to NUSACC for hosting a most valuable roundtable with H.E. Yahya Said Al Jabri and his delegation. I would like to thank him for his comprehensive overview of SEZAD and the opportunities that Duqm presents, and I look forward to visiting Oman soon." He went on to say, "The Sultanate has always been a gateway between East and West. Duqm now presents itself as a very attractive data gateway among regions and as a data-hub for the greater GCC."



H.E. Hunaina Al Mughairy (left), Oman's Ambassador to the United States, and Mr. Lewis Shadle, Managing Director, Virginia Beach DigiPorts.



H.E. Yahya Said Al Jabri (left), Chairman of SEZAD; The Honorable David Short (right), Deputy Assistant Secretary of Transportation for Aviation & International Affairs.

Dr. John Brennan, a Worldwide Public Sector Senior Manager at Amazon Web Services (AWS), served as moderator. He noted, “The Duqm Roundtable hosted by NUSACC surfaced important details about Oman’s progress on economic growth and diversification. Projects like Duqm have significant potential for the Omanis and investors.” He concluded, “I left the event inspired by the possibilities. Once again, NUSACC provided a wonderful venue, and the participants from the investment, business, advisory, and policy communities made it a rich, informative discussion.”

Mr. Rabih Mogharbel, NUSACC’s Vice President for Business Development, played an instrumental role in the success of the Roundtable. “The presentations that we saw today demonstrate that Duqm will continue to be a positive externality to Oman’s overall economic ecosystem,” he pointed out. “Duqm offers companies a cost-effective location, reasonable wages, affordable real estate, and a tax-friendly environment. Oman’s ease of doing business, coupled with the many benefits of the Special Economic Zone, ensure that Duqm will continue to attract companies interested in working in the Arabian Gulf, Africa, and beyond.”



Mr. Rabih Mogharbel (standing), NUSACC’s Vice President for Business Development, with H.E. Yahya Said Al Jabri (left) and David Short (right), Deputy Assistant Secretary of Transportation.

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NUSACC’s Expert Roundtable Series provides the Chamber’s members and guests with an exclusive opportunity to hear senior officials and other experts provide their candid insights in an off-the record setting. Please click [HERE](#) to read more about the benefits that NUSACC members enjoy.

*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.*