



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

عرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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U.S. – ARAB CHAMBER WELCOMES H.E. FAYÇAL GOUIA, TUNISIA'S NEW AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES

Washington, DC – Last week, the National U.S. – Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) hosted a welcome luncheon for Tunisia's new Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Fayçal Gouia. One hundred business leaders and senior government officials attended the event, held at the Willard InterContinental Hotel, to introduce Ambassador Gouia to the U.S. business community. The event was sponsored by King Street Strategies, a U.S. company investing in Tunisia, and was attended by such senior U.S. Government officials as Deputy Assistant U.S. Trade Representative Mark Mowrey and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John Desrocher.

"Tunisia stands tall as the Arab Spring's most significant success story," said David Hamod, President & CEO of the U.S. – Arab Chamber. "NUSACC is pleased to welcome Tunisia's new Ambassador to the United States, and our chamber looks forward to continuing our work to support Tunisia's economic reform initiatives."

Tunisia has great potential as a center of international trade in the region, with close business connections to Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. That nation has begun reforming its regulations in an effort to attract more foreign investment, including entrepreneurial start-ups. Small & medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in Tunisia's economy, which depends heavily on tourism, and SMEs are integral to Tunisia's efforts to foster a more inclusive civil society.



Tunisia's new Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Fayçal Gouia: "Yes, democracy and Islam can go together."

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NUSACC's Executive Vice President, Ambassador (ret.) Gordon Gray, introduced Ambassador Gouia. Noting that he had worked closely with the guest of honor during his own tenure as the U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia, Gray said, "Ambassador Gouia is a credit to the profession of public service. His service -- indeed, his entire career -- speaks well of Tunisia, and of his home town of Kairouan, one of the great centers of Islamic learning."

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NUSACC's EVP, Ambassador (ret.) Gordon Gray: "Ambassador Gouia is a credit to the profession of public service."

Ambassador Gouia opened his remarks by thanking NUSACC for its consistent support for Tunisia. He also thanked the business community for its growing interest, stating, "Thank you very, very much for being here with us today -- not for me, but for Tunisia."

Having recently elected a new leadership, Tunisia is the strongest democracy to emerge from the Arab Spring, making Tunisia an excellent example for other countries attempting to make a transition to democracy. "We in Tunisia are very proud of our revolution, from a dictatorship to a democracy," noted Ambassador Gouia. "President Obama and U.S. officials recognize Tunisia not as a model, but as an example for other Arab countries. Americans can now say, 'Yes, democracy and Islam can go together!'"

Tunisian and U.S. officials have emphasized the importance of economic development to the continued success of Tunisia's efforts to maintain security. "Tunisia is not a country where terrorism can flourish," noted Ambassador Gouia. "Terrorists would like to destroy this nascent and newborn democracy in the Muslim and Arab world. By attacking a resort in Sousse and the Bardo National Museum, they are attacking our economy. But I am confident that the Tunisian people will defeat these terrorists. Life is stronger than death."



One hundred business leaders and senior government officials attended the luncheon welcoming Ambassador Gouia, held at the Willard InterContinental Hotel.

Ambassador Gouia highlighted the legal reforms being undertaken by Tunisia to improve that nation's economic climate for investors. He spelled out efforts by Tunisia's Parliament to enact eight customs, taxation, public-private partnerships, and bankruptcy law reforms by the end of 2016. "Next year, we will have a new foreign investment code, and you will find in this new code many incentives to invest in Tunisia," he noted. "We have become the first

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country to sign a free trade agreement (FTA) with Europe, for example, so your companies will have FTA access to 28 European countries. We are working very hard to have a free trade agreement with the United States as well.”

Concluding his unprepared remarks, Ambassador Gouia stated, “You may have some questions about the new Tunisia, and whenever you ever want to see me, I am ready. My door is open to all of you. If you are far away, I can come to you. Tunisia is a country that deserves your investment and support.”

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Ambassador Gouia (left) opened his remarks by thanking NUSACC (represented by David Hamod, right, President & CEO) for its consistent support for Tunisia.

The Ambassador then answered questions from the audience, many of which focused on the growth of entrepreneurship in Tunisia. In response to a question about the role of Information Technology (IT) in Tunisia, Ambassador Gouia highlighted the importance of IT to the Tunisian economy. He also cited Tunisia’s potential to be the top IT hub in Africa, with that sector second only to manufacturing in Tunisia. Responding to a related question about the promotion of venture capitalism in Tunisia, Ambassador Gouia said he plans to visit all 50 states in the USA to gain a better understanding of how to encourage Tunisian entrepreneurs.

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The September 4 luncheon is the latest in a series of events that NUSACC has hosted to foster stronger relations between the Tunisian and U.S. business communities. Some of these include:

- Partnering with the Tunisian Embassy to host a [luncheon for Tunisia’s Minister of Finance and Minister of Tourism and Handicrafts](#). This event took place during the historic visit of Tunisian President Béji Caïd Essebsi to the United States in May 2015. The ministers highlighted new initiatives to overhaul the country’s regulations and to spur investment in Tunisia’s growing entrepreneurial sector.
- [Leading a business delegation of 18 U.S. companies to Tunisia](#) in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State in April 2015. While in Tunis, the delegates held numerous ministerial meetings on commercial opportunities and participated in a high-level Investment & Entrepreneurship Conference, led on the U.S. side by Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker.

- [Hosting a dinner for then Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa and his delegation](#) during an April 2014 visit to the United States. During that event, which drew top representatives of more than 300 U.S. companies, Prime Minister Jomaa promoted Tunisia as a “start-up democracy,” highlighting the importance of a strong economy to the sustainability of Tunisia’s fledgling democracy.

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A dedicated member of his country’s foreign service, Ambassador Gouia previously served as Tunisia’s ambassador to Indonesia, with dual accreditation to the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, and Brunei. Immediately prior to being selected as Ambassador to the United States, he was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. A more complete biography for Ambassador Gouia may be found [HERE](#).

To learn more about NUSACC, click [HERE](#).



King Street Strategies, a U.S. consulting firm active in Tunisia and represented here by Ms. Kathy Bailey, sponsored the welcome luncheon honoring the new Tunisian ambassador.

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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