



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 3, 2016  
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## **NUSACC EXPERT ROUNDTABLE: TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR TOUTS BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES TO BE SHOWCASED AT INVESTMENT CONFERENCE**

***1,800 Confirmed Participants From Over 70 Countries  
Will Get a “Sneak Peek” at 50 Projects Worth \$20 Billion***

***Ambassador Fayçal Gouia Praises Tunisia’s Partnership With  
NUSACC, Which He Characterizes as His “Second Home”***

**Washington, DC** – The National U.S.-Arab Chamber Commerce (NUSACC) hosted Tunisian Ambassador Fayçal Gouia this week as part of the Chamber’s continuing Expert Roundtable Series. Speaking to a “standing room only” crowd of stakeholders at NUSACC, [Ambassador Gouia](#) highlighted emerging opportunities for U.S. businesses in Tunisia, with a special focus on that nation’s [“Tunisia 2020” investment conference](#) taking place on November 29 & 30. He said that Tunisia expects to showcase 50 projects worth \$20 billion – part of the 2016-2020 Master Plan – at that event.

In his welcoming remarks, NUSACC President & CEO [David Hamod](#) noted, “Today, NUSACC is delighted to host an influential diplomat and a long-time



H.E. Fayçal Gouia, Tunisian Ambassador  
to the United States

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Ambassador Gouia (left) with David Hamod (right),  
NUSACC President & CEO

friend of the Chamber. Ambassador Gouia has worked diligently during his assignments in Washington and Tunis to promote U.S.-Tunisian business ties, and we greatly appreciate his insights and years of experience.” Hamod also expressed his deep appreciation to [General Atomics](#), [NxtVn Group](#), and [Sam’s Tech](#) for sponsoring this week’s Expert Roundtable Series event.

### Tunisia: Then and Now

Gouia gave a quick overview of the country since 1959, when Tunisia adopted the first constitution of its kind in the Arab world. He then fast-forwarded to late 2010 and the advent of the Arab Spring, which erupted in Tunisia when the Tunisian people “lost their dignity and their liberty,” he suggested.

“Since the days of the Arab Spring,” Gouia continued, “the country has implemented a political process that has, so far, been successful. Tunisia’s National Unity Government seeks to involve all parties, especially on the economic and social side, including civil society.” He stressed the country’s free and fair elections, its reliance on institutions, and its peaceful transitions of power. Gouia also highlighted Tunisia’s newly-minted Social and Economic Development Plan, which seeks to promote economic growth over the next five years. “We are doing our best to grow the Tunisian economy,” he said.

With this in mind, he noted, the Government of Tunisia will be hosting the [“Tunisia 2020” investment conference](#) in its capital city late this month. The conference will highlight some of Tunisia’s top investment sectors – like health care, green technologies, ICT, and education – and will help to raise funds to finance major infrastructure projects around the country. Gouia noted that 1,800 delegates from over 70 countries have already confirmed their participation in the gathering.

### Importance of Investments

Foreign investment is an essential element of Tunisia’s economy, Gouia said. Much of the investment to date is European, due largely to Tunisia’s proximity, responsible



The “Tunisia 2020” investment conference will be held on November 29 - 30, 2016.



Ambassador Gouia (right) with Arab League  
Ambassador Salah Sarhan (left)

for creating up to 700,000 jobs in Tunisia. Gouia emphasized the ever-growing need for investment from the United States, which can supply top-level expertise and technology to Tunisia.

The United States is Tunisia's fifth largest trading partner, Gouia said, and there is room to grow. He spoke of the strong relationship between the two countries – "Since 1797, the early days of American independence, there has been

uninterrupted trade between the Tunisia and the United States" – and he expressed hope that U.S. – Tunisia commercial relations are moving into a new, even closer, phase.

Gouia also pointed to Tunisia's recently-adopted investment law as a game-changer. "These reforms are very important because they foster a new business environment," he said, "and they are meant to encourage investments as part of Tunisia's development plans." The main reforms that have been adopted by the Parliament include passage of:

- A banking law to establish a modern banking system;
- Taxation reform through the adoption of a modern system;
- A public-private partnership law to facilitate better interaction between the public and private sectors;
- A competition law and the establishment of a competition authority to better regulate the market; and
- An investment code to promote investment for both Tunisian and foreign investors.

These new reforms, which have been nearly four years in the making, are widely regarded as a tremendous accomplishment for Tunisia. Gouia praised the achievement, saying, "The law represents a breakthrough in our efforts to boost investments. Tunisia is creating a business-friendly environment for all kinds of investment." The new law is expected to increase the volume of external investment by 80 percent.



The Tunisian Parliament is adopting a number of reforms to encourage foreign investment.

*(Photo credit: AP News)*

## Security in Tunisia

In response to questions regarding the security situation in Tunisia, Gouia emphasized that it is improving. Two years ago, he said, Tunisia was not equipped to combat terrorism. But the United States and others have provided expertise and technology to assist Tunisia to defend against terrorists and to protect its borders. As a result, he noted, the country is now far more secure, with the Army “defending our country, our people, and our frontiers.” Gouia expressed his deep appreciation for the support of President Obama, the U.S. Congress, and the American people.



Ambassador Gouia (left) with Steven Casazza (right), General Atomics

## Strong Ties between the Chamber and Tunisia

NUSACC has enjoyed working with Ambassador Fayçal Gouia over the years on a number of projects that have enhanced trade and investment between the United States and Tunisia. Gouia graciously thanked NUSACC, saying, “This Chamber has provided real support to Tunisia, especially after the revolution, by organizing the best events and trade missions to my country. NUSACC feels like my second home, where I am always among friends.”



Ambassador Gouia (right) with Nihad Akkad (left), NxtVn Group

NUSACC’s Executive Vice President, [Gordon Gray](#), was the U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia when the Arab Spring began. “I had the privilege to work closely with Fayçal Gouia in Tunisia during the revolution. Every request I made was met with a smile and a ‘can-do’ attitude,” he noted. “He is a real patriot who is dedicated to his country, which he has obviously served very well.”

## More Expert Roundtables To Come

This week’s Expert Roundtable engaged U.S. business leaders, but it also attracted a number of distinguished diplomats, including: H.E. Ambassador Salah Sarhan, Chief Representative of the Arab League; H.E. Ambassador Yasser Reda, Egypt’s Ambassador the United States; Senior Colonel Mohamed Ghouli, Tunisia’s military attaché; and former U.S. Ambassadors to the Arab world.

The NUSACC Expert Roundtable Series, held at the Chamber's offices, provides NUSACC members and stakeholders with in-depth insights on commercial opportunities and challenges in the MENA region. Information on the December 2016 and January 2017 Expert Roundtables will be forthcoming very soon.



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NUSACC's analysis of the most recent figures for U.S.-Tunisia trade may be found [HERE](#).

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To learn more about the benefits of membership in NUSACC, please click [HERE](#).

*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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