



NATIONAL U.S.-ARAB CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

غرفة التجارة الأمريكية العربية الوطنية

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NUSACC EXPERT ROUNDTABLE SERIES: AMBASSADOR REDA HIGHLIGHTS EMERGING BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN EGYPT

*Egyptian Diplomat Characterizes President El-Sisi's
Upcoming Visit as "Historic"*

Egypt is Making Steady Progress in Reforming its Economy

Washington, DC – The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) kicked off its 2017 Expert Roundtable Series with an exclusive, off-the-record presentation by [H.E. Yasser Reda](#), Egypt's Ambassador to the United States. Reda discussed many of the positive changes that have taken place in Egypt in recent years, with a special emphasis on that nation's comprehensive reform program to "bolster Egypt's industrial, commercial, and entrepreneurial sectors." Egypt is phasing out subsidies that have been around for decades, and the Ambassador praised the Egyptian people's resilience and acceptance of the reform program, which was necessary to put Egypt back on the right track in the long term.



His Excellency Yasser Reda,
Egyptian Ambassador to the United States

In his welcoming remarks, NUSACC President & CEO David Hamod suggested that U.S. – Egypt relations "may be approaching a historic change that could bring our nations even closer together. Egypt has always been a solid friend and strategic partner of the United States, and there is every indication that this partnership is on track to expand in the months ahead."

Egypt has traditionally been one of America's major markets in the Middle East and North America, registering \$3.5 billion in U.S. goods exports in 2016. (Click [HERE](#) to read the Chamber's just-released news report on 2016

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U.S. trade with the Middle East.) The Chamber has actively supported Egypt for many years, and NUSACC frequently hosts visiting delegations of [young entrepreneurs and emerging leaders](#) from that nation.

Lead Sponsors for the Egypt Roundtable included “Platinum Plus” Chamber members [Black & Veatch](#) and [Lockheed Martin](#). [NxtVn Group](#), also a Platinum Plus member of NUSACC, served as a Contributing Sponsor.



Jared Thomas, Director of the Middle East and Africa for Lockheed Martin

Positive Political Developments

Reda began his remarks to the capacity crowd by discussing recent political developments. He acknowledged that political instability during the years 2011 - 2014 elevated security concerns in the region and significantly impacted the Egyptian economy. The situation today is much more stable, Reda suggested, notwithstanding the mid-February shuffling of the Cabinet, which is expected to result in a more business-friendly Cabinet. “Egypt has completed its political roadmap by finishing a new constitution, electing a new President, and electing a new Parliament,” Reda said, and “the security situation is almost back to normal.”

U.S. – Egypt relations has faced some challenges in recent years, Reda pointed out, as evidenced by the fact that the last Presidential visit dedicated exclusively to Egypt took place in 2004. A 13-year absence will provide Egypt and the United States with an opportunity to press the “reset button,” the Ambassador noted, and he characterized President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi’s upcoming visit to Washington as “historic.”



Ambassador Reda discussed recent political developments, Egypt’s economic reform program, and economic relations with the United States.

Egypt's Economic Reform Program

The key objectives of the Government of Egypt right now are to “restore macroeconomic stability and create employment,” Reda explained. He outlined the steps that his country is taking in accordance with its three-year extended arrangement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF):

1. Egypt has liberalized its foreign exchange system, which has had a positive impact by reversing foreign exchange shortages, boosting investment, and increasing exports. Reda observed that allowing the Egyptian Pound to float was not without political risk, pointing out that the last time such reforms were undertaken, in 1977, widespread rioting quickly quashed the reforms. “But the Egyptian people are resilient,” Reda said, and they are committed to see this process through. He added that after reform measures were taken by the Government, Egyptian foreign exchange reserves increased from \$19 billion in October 2016 to \$26.4 billion today.
2. Egypt has enacted a new Value Added Tax and implemented other tax reforms.
3. Egypt is reforming its customs procedures.
4. The Government of Egypt is phasing out energy subsidies. Reda characterized this as “delicate,” while noting, “people appear willing to bear the burden.”
5. The Government of Egypt is containing the amount of wages paid to the public sector, reducing it to 6.7 percent of Gross Domestic Product. “The new civil service law, passed by Parliament in August 2016, will modernize the entire public employment framework,” Reda added.



Ambassador Reda (center) with David Hamod (left), NUSACC President & CEO, and Amin Salam (right), NUSACC Vice President of Business Development

Reda acknowledged that “the private sector plays an important role” in these reform measures; consequently, the Government of Egypt has recently submitted new investment and bankruptcy laws to the Egyptian Parliament. Egypt also welcomes U.S. support, he said, particularly American technology and investment.

Economic Relations with the United States

During the spirited question and answer session that followed the Ambassador’s remarks, NUSACC stakeholders asked questions about such sectors as telecommunications, insurance & reinsurance, power generation, alternative energy, waste management, and health care. Reda highlighted some of the megaprojects that are being positioned in Egypt, welcoming U.S. companies to bid on these opportunities.

Reda described U.S. – Egypt economic relations as one of the main pillars of the strategic partnership between the two countries, which benefit the mutual interests of both nations. He also praised the outstanding role the American business community has played in strengthening these relations.

In response to a question about fierce business competition from China, Reda affirmed that while Egypt is keen to build on its strategic relations with the United States, “Egypt is working to attract more investments to enhance growth and create more jobs, and the Egyptian market is open for business and investments from any part of the globe on an equal and competitive basis.”



H.E. Fayçal Gouia (left), Tunisian Ambassador to the United States, with Embassy of Egypt representatives Wael Hamed (center), Deputy Chief of Mission, and Mohamed Elhady (right), First Secretary of Economic Affairs

Expert Roundtable Series

The NUSACC Expert Roundtable Series provides members and stakeholders with an opportunity to hear directly from experts. Roundtables are held periodically throughout the year. The audience for this event included such distinguished diplomats as H.E. Salah Sarhan, the Arab League Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Fayçal Gouia, Tunisia’s Ambassador to the United States, and H.E. Wael Hamed, the Deputy Chief of the Egyptian Embassy in



the United States. The Roundtable attracted 40 business leaders, including former U.S. Congressman Nick Rahall, who is working with the [Shafik Gabr Foundation](#), based in Cairo.

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H.E. Salah Sarhan (above),
Chief Representative of the
League of Arab States in
Washington, DC



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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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