
INFORMATION NOTE: GENEVA

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ITC OFFICE FOR ARAB STATES HOSTS OPEN DOOR EVENT

Representatives of Permanent Missions, UN agencies, donors and civil society came together at a half-day open door event to look at the implications of the 'Arab Spring' on trade and development in the Arab region. The International Trade Centre's (ITC) Office for Arab States brought these key staff and stakeholders together to discuss the developmental and economic impacts of recent events in the region.

The Arab States have witnessed unprecedented events over the past six months and many of the countries are beginning to articulate their new needs and review their trade situation. The nature of aid and particularly Aid for Trade will play an important role in the coming years in the rebuilding of the economies.

ITC has been closely following the events in the region and analysing possible impacts on trade and development. The Open Doors for Arab States has allowed ITC to refine its strategic approach as well as the nature and scope of its assistance to the countries in the region to better respond to their evolving needs.

ITC's view is that creating sustainable jobs, particularly among women and youth, presents the biggest challenge to the region. ITC stands ready to provide its technical expertise by assisting export sectors which have high potential for job creation.

The open door event, held in Geneva on 7 June, enabled staff, stakeholders and Permanent Missions to better understand ITC's work in the region and its vision for the future, and to discuss the implications of the 'Arab Spring' on trade-related technical assistance.

Panellists included:

- Talaat Abdel-Malek, Senior Economic Adviser for the Minister of International Co-operation, Egypt;
- Professor Riccardo Bocco, Faculty Member, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, specializing in the Near East; and
- Sherif El Diwany, former Director, Head of Middle East and North Africa, World Economic Forum and currently Special Advisor to the Forum's Chairman and an independent business strategy advisor to the Boards of European and GCC companies working in Egypt and throughout the Arab World.

The discussions have enabled ITC to refine its strategic approach to assistance to the Arab States and take an informed view of its future activities in the region. Key recommendations made include the need to focus on sustainable jobs for youth and women, the importance of being involved in institutional transformation in the countries affected by change, and the vital role played by innovation and entrepreneurship to revive growth in these countries. During the event, ITC shared a draft of its strategy for the Arab States, which the organization will fine-tune and use to prepare a special trade-related technical assistance programme for the region.

ITC is the joint agency of WTO and the United Nations and is devoted to helping SMEs in developing countries become more competitive in global markets and thus to speed up sustainable economic development and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

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