

Report from the Annual Meeting, Copenhagen, Denmark Dec. 7-8th 2012

Participants

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Approval of Policy Position Papers and Endorsement of Annual Report

After a welcoming by Deputy Director General of DI, Mr. Thomas Bustrup, the first session of the meeting concerned the adoption of the Network's policy position papers and subsequently the annual report. Besides minor changes to the details regarding funding obligations, there were no changes made and all 4 policy position papers, their advocacy strategies, as well as the annual report were unanimously adopted after each position paper was presented by representatives of the business organisations.

The Libyan Businessmen Council who participated for the first time in the network was included as signatory to the documents and recognized as a full member of the Network and party to the MoU that formalizes the cooperation (MoU is attached).

Translation and publication of the annual report is on its way and will be finalized beginning of January and send to you in hard copy (100 examples in Arabic and 100 in French or English) as well as electronic copies.

Selection of topics for 2012 and endorsement by Danish Minister for Development Cooperation

The process of choosing the topics for next year started with all participants brainstorming on which topics they would like to see dealt with in the network. This included a list of more than 20 important topics/challenges for the private sector. The discussion also emphasized the need to embrace the recommendations from the adopted position papers and secure that we implemented some of them as some of the recommendations, such as the export know how and a MENA Export Helpdesk, demanded a lot more work.

After the first round of discussions, the 20 topics were grouped under 7 broad overall headings covering 1) Transport, 2) Environment, 3) Harmonisation, 4) Education, 5) SME environment, 6) Trade Politics and 7) EU. From these 7 overall topics, 2-3 were prioritized as the themes for next year's working groups. In a first round of voting the 7 topics were narrowed down to 3 and since all three topics were given the same amount of votes in a second round, it was decided to pursue all three areas of 1) Education, 2) International Trade Politics and 3) SME Environment.

The 3 topics were discussed further and described in more detail. For “Education” this included: 1) entrepreneurship culture, 2) export training courses, 3) special programs for gifted people and 4) vocational training. The topic of “International Trade Politics” included: 1) rules of origin, 2) anti-dumping, 3) image of Arab enterprises. Finally, the topic of SME Environment included: 1) SME innovation and 2) Access to Finance.

The topics are still broad and will be defined in more detail at the first working group meeting as well as synergies will be made to the existing 40 recommendations. DI and other Experts on the 3 overall topics will be invited to participate at the first working group meeting.

Welcome Dinner with the Minister

In the evening the welcoming dinner included the Danish Minister for Development Cooperation, Mr. Christian Friis Bach as well as the Danish Ambassador to Lebanon, Mr. Jan Top Christensen. The minister delivered a keynote speech wherein he stressed the importance of the network and its unique timing, including the efforts to be made under the Danish EU presidency of 2012 regarding improving the free trade agreements under the EU neighborhood agreements and looking into the FTA between the EU and the GCC countries.

Visit to Danish Parliament

During day two of the meeting, the participants visited the President of the Danish Parliament, President of the Parliament and former Prime Minister Mr. Mogens Lykketoft. The meeting focused on the possibilities and challenges of the MENA region with one of the most experienced Danish politicians who clearly shared the view of economic development and democratic reforms being two sides of the same coin. Furthermore, Mr. Lykketoft used the occasion to explain the particularly successful “Danish Model” for social dialogue and how this could be a source of inspiration for organizations in the MENA region seeking to improve the conditions for the private sector. Finally, the participants were given a tour of the Parliament and an introduction into the working of the Danish democracy.

DI Middle East Day and Meeting with the CEO of DI

After a brief meeting with the CEO of DI, Mr. Karsten Dybvad, the participants took part in the annual “DI Middle East Day” together with Danish companies and public officials with an interest in the MENA region. The participants had a chance to network with the companies and provide insight into the many business opportunities of the MENA-region. Keynote speeches were given by Ms. Ania Thiemann of the OECD and Mr. Angus Hindley of the MEED.

Next Steps (tentative calendar for 2012)

1st Working group meeting in Jordan, Amman

The Jordan Chamber of Industry has kindly accepted to host the first working group meeting of 2012. The proposed time for this meeting is in the middle of March and invitations and agenda will be submitted early January. The meeting will consist of a detailed follow-up on the implementation of the 2011 policy position

papers and a discussion and work plan for the 2012 policy issues, including any studies or surveys that are needed to undertake to validate our work. Experts on the 3 subjects that have been chosen for 2012 will be invited to qualify our discussions in Amman and secure that we take note of lessons learned elsewhere.

2nd Working group meeting

The second working group meeting will ideally take place in June. Place and exact time will be set in Jordan in March.

Thank you for your continued support

Niels Tanderup Kristensen

NB: All presentations are uploaded on the [website of the network](#)

