



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الإتحاد من أجل المتوسط



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ASSOCIATION DES CHAMBRES DE COMMERCE ET D'INDUSTRIE DE LA MÉDITERRANÉE
ASSOCIATION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
جمعية غرف التجارة والصناعة للبحر الأبيض المتوسط



Concept Note

The UfM Business Forum – Egypt 2019 *Cairo, 18 June 2019*

In their [UfM Ministerial Declaration of March 2018](#), the UfM Trade Ministers encouraged the organization of business-to-government and business-to-business meetings in the region, in order to include business organizations and operators in the definition and implementation of the trade and investment reform agenda in the Mediterranean. To this end, the Ministers expressed their wish to organize a UfM Business Forum.

Acting upon the Ministerial mandate and fulfilling its role as the Euro-Mediterranean platform for regional dialogue and consensus-building on sectoral agendas, the UfM in partnership with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and also in partnership with the Association of Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCAME), will hold a **Business Forum in Cairo, Egypt on 18 June 2019**, under the auspices of the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Egypt and the participation of Ministers, other senior government representatives, the private sector, civil society and international organizations.

The 2019 UfM Business Forum will focus on two trade issues of paramount importance to the economic integration and development of the Mediterranean region – **market access and e-commerce**. Of all Euro-Mediterranean trade flows, only 9% take place between the EU and the countries South and East of the Mediterranean. Merely 1% of trade takes place between the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries themselves. The UfM region thereby remains one of the most economically fragmented and least integrated regions in the world. Improved market access and the exploitation of new market opportunities – such as e-commerce – could not only boost intra-regional trade, but could radically transform the economic landscape and incite structural changes that would contribute to sustainable economic growth in the whole region.

In view of this, the UfM Business Forum will bring together public and private sector representatives to identify strategies for the removal of existing market access restrictions, targeting issues such as tariff and non-tariff barriers, quality infrastructure, market information, the costs of trade, rules of origin and the development of meaningful linkages between relevant market players.

In the same way, the production, distribution, marketing, sale or delivery of goods and services by electronic means holds enormous economic opportunities for businesses in the



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Mediterranean. With high population growth and quickly improving internet and mobile phone penetration rates in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, the SEMED region is one of the fastest growing e-commerce markets in the world. The growing domestic demand as well as the export of goods and services through online marketplaces provide for great economic opportunities, which so far have been underexploited in comparison to other parts of the world. At the same time, e-commerce opens up a whole set of challenges for businesses and regulators alike, ranging from the need for investments into new technologies to questions on cyber security, data protection and net-neutrality.

By allowing a broad spectrum of regional stakeholders to exchange their experiences and views, to showcase best practices and success stories and to expose challenges and risks, the 2019 UfM Business Forum will help to identify actions that can deliver the full benefits of e-commerce and those of a more open and integrated trading system in the region.