

REGIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

6<sup>th</sup>—7<sup>th</sup>  
MARCH 2024  
CAIRO, EGYPT

# Closing gender gaps in the MENA financial sector: towards women- led business development

## AGENDA

Organized by



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



الاتحاد العربي للمصارف  
Union of Arab Banks

With the support of



Sweden  
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In collaboration with



MEANA Women  
Business Club



The American  
University in Cairo  
School of Business  
Center for Entrepreneurship  
and Innovation



INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL  
6<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> OF MARCH, 2024 - CAIRO, EGYPT



## Context

The MENA region has the world's highest entrepreneurial inequality between men and women, where less than 5% of businesses are women-led, compared to a global average of 23-26%. Women in the MENA region endure some of the highest levels of discrimination in accessing production and financial resources, according to the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

Every year, the MENA region suffers losses of \$575 billion due to the lack of female economic participation. For instance, the region's female unemployment rate is equal to 15.5 percent, compared to 6.7 percent for men, and is more than three times the global average. The gap in ownership of established businesses between men and women in the MENA region is more than 40 percent, the largest worldwide. The overall **Gender Gap 2022 in the MENA region is at 62.6% which, of all regions, represents the largest gap to close.** According to the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2022, it is indeed estimated that **a timeframe of 152 years will be needed to close the gender gap.**

In comparison with the previous year, within the region there is **0.9 percentage point decline in parity. Of the four-index considered in the above-mentioned report, the MENA region sees more equality in Health and Survival (96.4%) and Educational Attainment (95.9%),** whereas there is **little equality in Economic Participation and Opportunity (44%) and Political Empowerment (14%).**

Integrating more women into the region's business landscape could help solve many of the region's economic problems, such as creating jobs and economic wealth, and tackling existing inequalities.

The Union of Arab Banks in partnership with the Union of the Mediterranean, and in collaboration with prominent international organizations is organizing a conference on **"Closing gender gaps in MENA financial sector towards women-led business development"** on March 6 and 7, 2024 in Cairo, Egypt.

This event will mark the **International Women's Day 2024** and will bring together senior bankers and entrepreneurs from the MENA region to shed light on the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in scaling up their businesses, ranging from gender disparity in funding to lack of support. It will highlight the ongoing work on narrowing the gender gap in MENA financial sector towards women-led business development and will give the opportunity to exchange on promising practices and critical issues related to supporting women entrepreneurs in launching and expanding their businesses.



## Agenda & Timetable

### Opening ceremony and key note speeches

#### Women Business Club Awards

#### Three Panels of discussion

- **Panel 1** - The role of financial institutions and banks in promoting gender equality: Leveraging the We-Fi Code for accelerating impact in MENA
- **Panel 2** - Gender disparities in access to finance for business creation and development
- **Panel 3** - Behind the female angel investment scene in the MENA region

### Three Roundtables and the Mena women Business Club Award

- **Roundtable 1** - Women in Fintech: Bridging the Gender Gap
- **Roundtable 2** - Innovative practices to boost women's financial inclusion
- **Roundtable 3** - Bridging the gap for international trade and gender inclusion

#### Matchmaking for startups

## Day One — Wednesday 06/03/2024

**08:30 - 09:30** ..... **Registration & Morning Coffee**

**09:30 - 09:33** ..... **Introductory Note: Wissam H. Fattouh**, Secretary General, Union of Arab Banks

**09:33 - 10:30** ..... **Opening Ceremony & Welcoming Remarks:**

- **Nasser Kamel**, Secretary General, Union for the Mediterranean
- **Mohamed El Etreby**, Chairman, Union of Arab Banks
- **Saad Sabra**, IFC Senior Country Officer for Egypt, International Finance Corporation
- **Janneke van der Graaff- Kukler**, Deputy Regional Director of the UN Women for the Arab States

Moderator: **Karima El Hakim**, Plug and Play Egypt Country Director

**10:30 - 11:30** ..... **Panel 1: The role of financial institutions and banks in promoting gender equality: Leveraging the We-Fi Code for accelerating impact in MENA**

Chair: **International Finance Corporation**

Opening speech by **Maher Al-Mahrouq**, Director General of the Association of Banks in Jordan

- **Khaled Bassiouny**, Head of Financial Inclusion, Central Bank of Egypt

- **Amr El-Demerdash**, Head of MSME and Islamic Finance, Banque Misr
- **Michal Harari**, Head of Delegation, Embassy of Switzerland in Egypt
- **Riadh Naouar**, Manager Advisory and Upstream Services FIG Africa, IFC

Moderator: **Wendy Teleki**, Head of the We-Fi Secretariat

**11:30 - 11:45** ..... **Keynote speech “Empower Organizations through Gender Diversity “**

**Nahla Bou Diab**, CEO-Chief Executive officer of AMBANK, Head of Gender Diversity Group for the World Union of Arab Bankers – Lebanon

**11:45 - 12:00** ..... **Coffee break**

**12:00 - 13:15** ..... **Panel 2: Gender disparities in access to finance for business creation and development**

Chair: **UfM**

- **Anne Kofoed**, Team Leader for Governance in the EU Delegation to Egypt
- **Charlotte Goemans**, Programme Coordinator and Policy Analyst, Middle East and Africa Division, Global Relations and Cooperation Directorate, OECD
- **Kateryna Morton**, Senior Officer, Finance in Motion for the SANAD Fund for MSME's Technical Assistance Facility
- **Noha ElSebaie**, Program Manager, Hivos MENA Hub
- **Amr Soliman**, Member of the National Council for Women, Egypt

Moderator: **Charlotta Sparre**, Director of the Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa, Jordan

**13:15 - 14:30** ..... **Panel 3: Behind the Female Angel investment Scene in the MENA region**

Chair: **MENA WBC**

- **Christine Sedky**, Angel investor and Tiya Angels Manager
- **Riham Abu Elinin**, Founder & CEO at BznBuilder
- **Hany Assad**, Co-founder Avanz Capital
- **Sabrina Salama**, Head of MENA partnerships at Seedstars

Moderator: **Karima El Hakim**, Plug and Play Egypt Country Director

**14:30 - 14:40** ..... Speech: **Mohamed Amine**, Founder, Markaz, Sponsor Appreciation Gift

**14:40 - 15:30** ..... **Lunch**

## Day Two — Thursday 07/03/2024

### 09:30 - 10:30 ..... Roundtable 1: Women in Fintech: Bridging the Gender Gap

- **Amira Kaddour**, Professor at King Khalid University, KSA
- **Dina Yacout**, CEO and Founder, Conseil Consulting, Egypt
- **Joelle Yazbeck**, ICC-ESCWA Centre of Entrepreneurship, Lebanon
- **Sara Abdul Samad**, Managing Partner at IPCL / Board Member, Lebanese Business Council in Kuwait
- **Hossam Ezz**, CEO, FawryFMCG, Egypt

Moderator: **Christophe Malherbe**, International Policy and Regulation Expert

### 10:30 - 12:00 ..... Roundtable 2: Innovative practices to boost women financial inclusion

Chair: **AUC CEI -Egypt**

- **Jessy Radwan**, Founder – Carerha, Egypt
- **Noha Abdelhamid**, President - Women Entrepreneurs Network, Egypt
- **Sahar Mounir**, Banking and finance Consultant, Egypt
- **Suzan Hamdy**, Chief Sustainability and Sustainable Finance Officer, Banque Misr
- **Marwa Hammad**, Head of the Global Gender Strategy - Schneider Electric

Moderator: **Hala Barakat**, Director, Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Egypt

### 12:00 - 12:30 ..... Coffee break

### 12:30 - 13:30 ..... MENA WOMEN Business Club Pitching & Awards ceremony

Welcoming remarks: Club MD and COTO: The Prize Sponsor, **Aparna Acharekar**

Members of the Jury:

- UfM: **Anna Dorangricchia**, Project Manager Social and Civil Affairs
- Seedstars: **Sabrina Salama**, Head of MENA Partnerships
- Plug and Play: **Hania Tarek**, Egypt Program Manager
- Ministry of information technology: **Sara Elbarkoky**, Head of business and Entrepreneurship, ITIDA

### 13:30 - 14:30 ..... Lunch

### 14:30 - 15:30 ..... Roundtable 3: Bridging the gap for international trade and gender inclusion

Chair: **MENA Women Business Club**

- **Yehia Alwatheqbella**, Minister Plenipotentiary, First Undersecretary and Head of Egyptian Commercial Service, Ministry of Trade, Egypt
- **Sara Elbarkoky**, Head of business and Entrepreneurship, ITIDA, Ministry of information technology, Egypt
- **Doaa Gawish**, Founder and CEO, The hair addict, Egypt
- **Aparna Acharekar**, Eve World Platform, COTO Cofounder
- **Thanaa Al Khasawneh**, Executive Director & Founding Member - Business & Professional Women Association, Jordan

Moderator: **Ayah Elarief**, MENA WBC Managing Director

### 15:30 - 15:40 ..... Closing Remarks

**John Paul Grech**, Deputy Secretary General, Social and Civil Affairs Division, Union for the Mediterranean

### 15:40 - 16:30 ..... Matchmaking session

Chair: **MENA WBC**

This session is dedicated to matchmaking for the startups with a pool of investors.



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