

REPORT:

10th Arab-Austrian Economic Forum & Exhibition

Conference on: Energy Transition – Urban Technology and Sustainable Cities New Opportunities for International Cooperation and Partnerships



On October 1, 2018, the AACC and its partners invited high-level officials, speakers and visitors at the **10th Arab-Austrian Economic Forum & Exhibition: Conference on Energy Transition – Urban Technology and Sustainable Cities - New Opportunities for International Cooperation and Partnerships** which was held at the premises of the Vienna City Hall, the headquarters of the municipality of Vienna.

The 10th Arab-Austrian Economic Forum & Exhibition was organised by the **Austro-Arab Chamber of Commerce (AACC)** together with the **Vienna Business Agency (VBA) / City of Vienna** and the **Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE)**, and in cooperation with the **Union of the Mediterranean (UfM)**, the **United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)** and the **Union of Arab Chambers (UAC)**.

The high-level speakers presented and discussed topics related to **energy, urban development and technologies in the Euro-Arab context**: Highlighting and analyzing energy profiles; the exchange of experiences and best practice models for modern and urban developments; and identifying related financial tools and mechanisms for the implementation of the projects. As a special highlight of this year's Forum, a **“High Level Policy Dialogue” (HLPD)** coordinated by the **Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (RCREEE)** was launched to build-up partnerships to promote investments, financing and up-scaling sustainable energy projects via strengthening the cooperation with the private sector in the Arab countries and Europe.

The **10th Arab-Austrian Economic Forum & Exhibition** was honoured by the presence of approximately 400 participants throughout the day, among them high-level dignitaries and official representatives from ministries, international organizations and official institutions, business personalities, together with representatives of the local economy, politics and the Austro-Arab business community.



The **Exhibition Area** was opened by Secretary General of the Austro-Arab Chamber of Commerce **Eng. Mouddar Khouja**, followed by the Opening of the **Conference / Forum** by the President of the AACC **H.E. Senator Dr. Richard Schenz** who gave a warm welcome to the high-level dignitaries, representatives, VIP speakers and visitors.



Left image: Opening of the Exhibition by AACC Secretary General Dipl.-Ing. Mouddar Khouja
Right image: H.E. AACC President Dr. Richard Schenz at the Opening of the Forum

A special welcome by the President was dedicated to the founding father and Arab President of the Austro-Arab Chamber of Commerce, **H.E. Kommerzialrat Nabil R. Kuzbari**; **H.E. Sheikh Khalifa Al Thani**, President of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce; Presidents & Representatives of the Arab Chambers and Joint-Arab chambers coming **from Libya, Iraq, Qatar, Jordan, Syria, Saudi-Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Germany and Greece**; Their Excellencies the **Ambassadors and Diplomatic Corps of Arab Countries in Austria**; Representatives from the international Diplomatic Corps, Representatives of the European Union, national & international organizations such as **UNIDO, OFID**; to **Dr. Ahmed Badr**, Executive Director of the Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (**RCREEE**); to **Dipl.-Ing. Mouddar Khouja**, the Secretary General of the AACC.



Left image: H.E. Arab President KR Nabil Kuzbari (left) with H.E. Amb. Dr. Johannes Peterlik
 Right image: H.E. Dipl.-Ing. Michael Esterl – H.E. Mr. Li Yong – H.E. KR Nabil Kuzbari (from left)

In representation of the Governor and Mayor of Vienna, **H.E. Dr. Michael Ludwig** who was not able to attend in person, **H.E. Dipl.-Ing. Omar Al-Rawi**, Member of State Parliament and City Council Vienna welcomed the guests first in Arabic and then delivered the statement on behalf of the City of Vienna.



H.E. Dipl.-Ing. Omar Al-Rawi

In his opening address, the Secretary General of the Iraqi Council of Minister, **H.E. Dr. Mahdi Allak** referred to the challenges the Iraqi economy was facing throughout the past years. “In order to meet the increasing demand for electricity, the Iraqi government started to think about diversifying energy sources by considering renewable and clean energy”, he added.



H.E. Dr. Mahdi Allak

With the **UNIDO** as cooperation partner for this year's Forum, the Opening Session was honoured with the personal participation of **H.E. Mr. Li Yong**, Director General of UNIDO. In his speech, the Director General reiterated his commitment that UNIDO stands ready to support new opportunities in advancing sustainable and innovative industrial development in the European and Arab region.



H.E. Mr. Li Yong

"If we want to keep our planet habitable for future generations, energy transition is a must for all of us", was one of the key messages of **H.E. Ambassador Dr. Johannes Peterlik**, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria. In his speech, he also referred to Austria's multidimensional relations with the Arab countries.



H.E. Ambassador Dr. Johannes Peterlik

H.E. Ambassador Mohamed Samir Koubaa, Head of the Mission of the League of Arab States in Austria, identified sustainable economic and social development as high priorities on the agenda of the League of Arab States. "With a population of around 400 million and a variety of natural, human resources and expertise, our meeting today is a great occasion to address new opportunities for co-operation", he added.



H.E. Ambassador Mr. Mohamed Samir Koubaa

“Innovation is the key to be competitive in a globalized world”, **H.E. Dipl.-Ing. Michael Esterl**, Secretary General of the Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs of the Republic of Austria stated in his speech. Speaking about Austria’s importance as an import and export country, he affirmed the AACC’s significant role for facilitating activities and cooperation between Arab and Austrian investors and partners, and acknowledged the Arab-Austrian Economic Forum as a platform to establish people contact and bring economic relations to life.



H.E. Dipl.-Ing. Michael Esterl

In his statement, **H.E. Dr. Khaled Hanafi**, Former Minister of Supply and Internal Trade in Egypt and current Secretary General of the Union of Arab Chambers spoke about challenges and opportunities on global level in general, and for the Arab region in particular. “We need to think of a model that replaces the youth migration from Arab countries, to a model that benefits from energy, innovation and digitalization to be employed in the Arab region”, he added. Referring to digitalization, the Secretary General introduced the ambitious digital project by the Union of Arab Chambers and related chambers that links all aspects of economy in one platform.



H.E. Dr. Khaled Hanafi

The Opening Session was moderated by **Ms. Sabine Ohler**, Director of International Business at the **Vienna Business Agency**, one of the co-organisers of this event.



Ms. Sabine Ohler

The **Ministerial Level Dialogue**, chaired by **H.E. Dr. Khaled Hanafi**, opened the floor to representatives from governmental institutions, the official sector and OMV AG, to discuss scopes of cooperation for a sustainable future. In his statement, **H.E. Mr. Herbert Scheibner**, Former Federal Minister of Defense of the Republic of Austria, Member of the AACC Board of Directors affirmed the need for a strong strategic cooperation in energy on all levels, including not only economic, but also cultural, social, educational and technological aspects. **H.E. Dr. Mustafa Al-Hiti**, Head of the Reconstruction Fund for Areas Affected by Terroristic Operations (REFAATO), Iraq, informed about the damages caused in Iraq and introduced projects for compensating the wasted development opportunities to achieve the national, social and humanitarian objectives of reconstruction. **Mr. Andreas Schwingshackl**, Senior Vice President Crude Supply & Trading, introduced his company OMV AG, Austria's largest stock-listed company with over 60 years of activities in the energy business, including oil and gas businesses. He identified the Middle East as one of the company's core regions with ADNOC, Libya National Oil Corporation and others as local partners. **H.E. Dr. Mahdi Allak**, Secretary General for the Council of Ministers, Iraq, presented the decisions and strategies taken by the Minister's Council to support local and foreign investments and to strengthen the private sector in Iraq.



Left image: Ministerial Panel (from left) / Mr. Andreas Schwingshackl – H.E. Mr. Herbert Scheibner – H.E. Dr. Khaled Hanafi – H.E. Dr. Mahdi Allak – H.E. Dr. Mustafa Al-Hiti | Right image: Mr. Andreas Schwingshackl

Session I, with focus on “**Investment Enabling Environment**” witnessed the launch of the first round of the **High level policy dialogue (HLPD)** coordinated by **RCREEE**, to discuss international cooperation in the Arab region to further facilitate sustainable investments in North Africa and the Middle East. The dialogue gathered a unique and diversified mix of expertise around one table from the governmental sector, funding and banking institutions, Regional organizations, investors and private sector, and UN organizations. Representing the governmental sector, RCREEE welcomed CFO of EETC **Mr. Mohamed El Sisi** who delivered a keynote message on behalf of H.E. Minister of Electricity and Renewable Energy in Egypt, Eng. Mohamed Shaker. Besides, Dutch Envoy for Water and Energy Security for the MENA region, **Ms. Tessa Terpstra** and Palestinian Energy and Environment Research Centre (PEC) Director, **Eng. Ayman Ismail** also participated as panelists in the session. Besides high-level panelists from UN organization (UNIDO, UNOPS, UN environment), financing institutions (FMO, OFID,) banking sector (IsDB, Austrian Kontrollbank and AfDB) and regional organizations and communities (MEDENER, RES4MED, REN21) enriched the topic with their comments on the need for a strong government support. The **HLPD** will continue in a series events aiming to come up with an initial well-articulated and well-studied list of bankable and realistic projects, ideally based on countries’ National Determined Contributions.



Left image: High-Level Policy Dialogue | Right image: Dr. Ahmad Badr

“Energy Outlook, Innovations and Financial Markets” were the core topics covered in **Session II**, consisting of expert speakers from academic and financial institutions, and company representatives. The Session was chaired by **Dr. Tareq Emtairah**, Director, Department of Energy at UNIDO and started with a presentation tackling issues of energy supply and electric mobility by **Mr. Johannes Benigni**, international expert for energy and Director of JBC Energy Asia. **Dr. Ali Hainoun**, Senior energy systems analyst, Centre of Energy, AIT Austrian Institute of Technology gave an insight on “Decarbonization Pathway and Energy Concepts - Cost and Innovation Need”. **Mr. Ferdinand Schipfer**, Managing Director International Relations & Analyses, Oesterreichische Kontrollbank (OeKB), spoke about the OeKB’s Export Financial Scheme and latest projects supported by the bank. In his portfolio presentation, **Mr. Vladimir Mitrovic** from IDS Industrieservice und Anlagenbau GmbH provided an overview on the company’s activities in the fields of welding and energy efficiency. **Dr. Margarete Rammerstorfer**, University Professor for Energy Markets and Investments, Vienna University of Economics and Business was represented by **Mr. Daniel Hill**, who informed the interested audience about the potential of energy efficiency investments with current examples and an energy capacity outlook.



Left image: Session II (from left) / Mr. Tareq Emtairah – Mr. Johannes Benigni – Mr. Daniel Hill – Dipl.-Ing. Ali Hainoun – Mr. Ferdinand Schipfer – Mr. Vladimir Mitrovic | Right image: Mr. Johannes Benigni

The last **Session III**, titled **“Smart Urban Management. How to implement innovation”** focused on urban planning and sustainable cities. This session was chaired by **Dr. Eugen Antalovsky**, CEO of Urban Innovation Vienna, senior advisor to cities and organisations (Vienna, New York, Bangkok, European Commission / ESPON) and author of reports and books on urban development, migration and integration. A high-level expert round discussed the role of cities in future transition towards green economies and sustainable development. **Dr. Thomas Madreiter**, Planning Director of the City of Vienna and Strategy Coordinator of the Smart City Strategy of Vienna opened the panel with a presentation on “Smart City Vienna - clever solutions for a liveable city”, where he presented the framework strategy, sectoral strategies and thematic concepts to boost Vienna’s position as the “most livable city in world”. “Digitizing urban ecosystems – the case of smart mobility” was the focus of **Ms. Barbara Flügge**’s presentation, where she tackled strategies for transforming into self-sustaining ecosystems based on intelligent management of public and private infrastructure. **Mr. Dawood Al-Shezawi**, Owner of Strategic Marketing & Exhibition, United Arab Emirates and President of the Annual Investment Meeting / Future Cities Show Dubai

shared his experiences referring to the city of Dubai as a modern and impressive example for Smart Cities Development over a short time period. **Mr. Hans-Martin Neumann**, Senior researcher & Thematic coordinator for urban transformation at the Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT) held a short presentation focused on “Smarter Together – Smarter Solutions for a better urban life. Sustainable buildings and cities”, followed by a panel discussion and interaction with the audience.



Left image: Session III / Dr. Thomas Madreiter – Dr. Barbara Flügge – Dr. Eugen Antalovsky – Mr. Dawood Al-Shezawi – Mr. Hans-Martin Neumann | Right image: Dr. Thomas Madreiter – Dr. Barbara Flügge – Dr. Eugen Antalovsky

After the Forum, a **B2B Meeting** with official representatives and business delegates from **Qatar, Libya, Syria, Kuwait** and **Lebanon** offered a platform for personal exchange and networking with potential future business partners.



The adjacent **Exhibition Area** presented colorful displays of diplomatic representations of the following Arab countries: **Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Sudan** and **Tunisia**. It also featured displays of various companies, enterprises and international institutions, including: **Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT); IDS Oberhausen; OMV; Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency**

(RCREEE); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); Vienna Business Agency / Wirtschaftsagentur Wien; Archides; Borealis; Hannah Collection / J. Lauer Textil; Mia Limousinen; Porr AG; Royal Jordanian; 7Eun / 7Eyes; Faro & Leoni UG; N.A.B. Fellingner. The Forum was also generously supported by VimpeX HandelsgmbH; Rauch; Red Bull; and S. Spitz.



As a special media feature, the 10th Arab-Austrian Economic Forum & Exhibition was recorded live and published on air via **live-streaming video link** on the **AACC's facebook sites**, offering all interested audience a participation in the event even while not being present in person.

On the evening of the same day, the **AACC** invited its guests, members and partners to a festive **Gala Dinner** on occasion of the 10th Arab-Austrian Economic Forum & Exhibition. The evening was partially sponsored by **OMV AG** and **Vimpex Handels GmbH**. Moderator **Mrs. Leila Kaplan** from the Austro-Arab Chamber of Commerce guided through the programme of the evening. Among the highlights was a **fashion show** of Austrian traditional dresses by **Hannah Collection / Lauer Trachten**, and gift presentations for **H.E. Kommerzialrat Nabil R. Kuzbari**, the Arab President and Founding Father of the Austro-Arab Chamber of Commerce; and for **H.E. Dr. Michael Ludwig**, the Governor and Mayor of Vienna, represented by **Dipl.-Ing. Omar Al-Rawi**; the gifts were uniquely handcrafted and generously contributed by artist and designer **Ms. Rima Juburi** from **7Eun/7Eyes**.



Links:

- [Video of the Forum & Exhibition / Panels](#)
- [Photo Gallery Forum & Exhibition](#)
- [Photo Gallery Gala Dinner](#)