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ARAB COMPETITION FORUM

[ACF] – 24-25 MAY 2022 [Muscat, Sultanate of Oman]



Shared Prosperity Dignified Life



Sultanate of Oman
سلطنة عمان
وزارة التجارة والصناعة وترويج الاستثمار
Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion



OECD



International
Trade
Centre

Background

Competition is a key driver of national growth, innovation and productivity. Well-enforced competition policies can contribute to efficient markets and to enhancing consumers' choices. Competition helps reduce poverty and social inequalities, and plays a pivotal role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Despite its many economic and social benefits, competition policy is still lagging in the Arab region. While this can be attributed to several factors, inefficient market structures and governance systems are key obstacles in several Arab countries. The 2021 Arab Business Legislative Framework (ABLF)¹ revealed that most Arab countries lack autonomous institutions to enforce competition policies, which hinders consistent and coherent competition reforms. According to the 2021 ABLF assessment, the regional competition score was 3.73/7, indicating that there are still substantial reforms required in terms of regulations and enforcement when compared with international best practices.

In terms of competitiveness, although the Arab region's average competitiveness score improved in 2019 to 56.68,² it still lags behind the global average. The competitiveness of an economy is highly influenced by the level of fair and healthy competition in its markets, which can be supported by enforcing effective anti-trust and anti-monopoly policies, and by providing the right incentives to promote local competition.

In 2020, ESCWA, in partnership with United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), launched the Arab Competition Forum, aimed at establishing a continual knowledge-sharing platform on competition policy and enforcement for Arab stakeholders. The Forum is an important platform for advancing advocacy and knowledge, and for building capacity on best practices in competition across the region. The Forum provides a common channel for advancing knowledge and best practices in competition, and facilitating coordination and collaboration at the national, regional and international levels.

The Third Arab Competition Forum is organized by ESCWA, in collaboration with UNCTAD, OECD, the International Trade Centre (ITC), the League of Arab States (LAS), and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion of the Sultanate of Oman. The two-day event will build on the momentum of the first and second forums. Competition authorities, government officials, experts and academics, both from within and outside the region, will gather to discuss the way forward for competition policy.

The following are the objectives of the Third Arab Competition Forum:

- Provide a substantive contribution towards improving economic growth and governance in the Arab region, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Strengthen collaboration and coordination between competition authorities in ESCWA member States.
- Inform competition policymaking and enforcement in the Arab region, guided by international best practices.
- Collect concrete recommendations on future activities related to advancing competition policy and enforcement in the Arab region.

¹ ESCWA, [Arab Business Legislative Frameworks](#), 2021.

² World Economic Forum, [The Global Competitiveness Report](#), 2019.

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For further information on the Forum, please visit the event website at <https://bit.ly/ACF22EN>

Agenda

Day 1. 24 May 2022	
8:30 – 9:00 a.m.	Registration and opening session
9:00 – 9:30 a.m. (Muscat Time – UTC+4) Meeting venue: Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat <i>Format: Open session / Broadcasted live</i>	Opening remarks and introductory comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qais Mohammed Moosa Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Sultanate of Oman • Rola Dashti, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA, Lebanon • Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Egypt
9:30 – 9:45 a.m.	Coffee break and group photo
9:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. (Muscat Time – UTC+4) Meeting venue: Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat <i>Format: Open session / Broadcasted live</i>	Session I. Panel discussion: Competition and Economic Policy Session coordinator: ESCWA <p>During this session, a discussion will take place between reputed economists, policymakers and experts on competition policy and the interlinkages with other economic policies. The discussion will also shed light on the importance of competition policy in achieving sustainable growth and development.</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tarik Alami, Cluster Leader, Governance & Enabling Environment, ESCWA <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frédéric Jenny, Chairman of the OECD Competition Committee, France • Batoul Abbas Awad Allam, Minister of Industry, Sudan • Mary T. Coleman, Executive Vice President of Compass Lexecon, United States of America (<i>online intervention</i>) • Abel Mateus, Professor of Economics at New University of Lisbon, Portugal (<i>online intervention</i>) • Dhafer bin Awad Al Shanfari, Former Deputy Chairman and Acting CEO of the Omani Competition Promotion and Monopoly Prevention Centre, Sultanate of Oman

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hamid Sultan Al-Busaidi, Executive Director, Oman Centre for Governance and Sustainability, Sultanate of Oman
11:15 – 11:30 a.m.	Coffee break
<p>11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (Muscat Time – UTC+4)</p> <p>Meeting venue: Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat</p> <p><i>Format: Closed session / Hybrid</i></p>	<p>Session II. A. Competition developments in the Arab region</p> <p>Session coordinators: LAS, ESCWA, and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion of the Sultanate of Oman</p> <p>Competition authorities from member States will present national case studies and/or competition developments since the second Arab Competition Forum, held in March 2021.</p> <p>LAS will present the latest projects and tools developed throughout the year to support well-established competitive policies and practices.</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Sultanate of Oman
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Lunch break
<p>2:00 – 3.30 p.m. (Muscat Time – UTC+4)</p> <p>Meeting venue: Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat</p> <p><i>Format: Closed session / Hybrid</i></p>	<p>Session II. B. Competition developments in the Arab region</p> <p>Session coordinators: LAS, ESCWA, and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion of the Sultanate of Oman</p> <p>Competition authorities from member States will present national case studies and/or competition developments since the second Arab Competition Forum, held in March 2021.</p> <p>LAS will present the latest projects and tools developed throughout the year to support well-established competitive policies and practices.</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Sultanate of Oman
Evening	
<p>7:00 p.m – 8:00 p.m (Muscat Time – UTC+4)</p> <p>Meeting venue: Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat</p>	<p>Special session: Arab Youth in Competition</p> <p>Session coordinators: ESCWA and Centre for the Protection of Competition and Prevention of Monopoly, Sultanate of Oman</p> <p>Participating Omani universities were requested to prepare an original case study on the topic “Anti-competitive behaviours from digital platforms/enterprises”. The special session Arab Youth in Competition takes place as a ceremony where an award will be granted to the</p>

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<p><i>Format: Open session / Broadcasted live</i></p>	<p>winner of the competition challenge. Furthermore, the winners have the opportunity to engage directly with two Arab youth competition advocates and present lessons learned and reflections on the challenge. The ceremony is followed by a celebration dinner.</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nasra Bint Sultan Ben Hafiz Al-Habsiya, Assistant Director-General of the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre, Sultanate of Oman <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menna Mahmoud, Youth Competition Expert (<i>online intervention</i>) • Rossi Abi-Rafeh, Ph.D. candidate at Toulouse School of Economics, Doctoral Fellow at Institute for Fiscal Studies, London (<i>online intervention</i>) • Nathalie Khaled, Economic Affairs Officer ESCWA, Lebanon
<p>8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Dinner</p>

<p>Day 2. 25 May 2022</p>	
<p>8:30 – 9:00 a.m.</p>	<p>Registration</p>
<p>9:00 – 10:15 a.m. (Muscat Time – UTC+4)</p> <p>Meeting venue: Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat</p> <p><i>Format: Open session / Hybrid</i></p>	<p>Session I. Competition in the Online Market: E-commerce and Digitalization</p> <p>Session coordinators: ITC and OECD</p> <p>Experts will present best practices and lessons learned to build sound competition policies in view of the various competition challenges emerging from the online market. Competition authorities from the Arab region and beyond will present specific country case studies on the topic.</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lynn Robertson, Competition Expert, OECD <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lilia Naas, Chief, Office for Arab States, International Trade Centre • Antonio Capobianco, Senior Competition Expert, OECD (<i>online intervention</i>) • Pinar Akman, Professor of Laws, Leeds University (<i>online intervention</i>) • Robert Anderson, ITC Consultant, former Team Leader for Competition Policy in the WTO Secretariat (<i>online intervention</i>) • Kayvan Hazemi-Jebelli, Competition & Regulatory Counsel at CCIA Europe (<i>online intervention</i>)

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jamil Zayed, Director, Competition Directorate at the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Jordan
10:15 – 10:30 a.m.	Coffee break
10:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. (Muscat Time – UTC+4) Meeting venue: Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat <i>Format: Open session / Hybrid</i>	<p>Session II. Assessment of Institutional Capacity in Competition</p> <p>Session coordinator: OECD</p> <p>This session highlights the main institutional challenges faced by competition authorities in the Arab region and brings forward case studies and methodologies to better identify institutional gaps in the implementation of competition law and policy.</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teresa Moreira, Head, Competition and Consumer Policies Branch, Division on International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Kovacic, Professor, George Washington University, Non-Executive Director, United Kingdom’s Competition Authority (<i>online intervention</i>) • Said Kechida, Competition Expert, OECD • Nathalie Khaled, Economic Affairs Officer ESCWA, Lebanon • Ahlem Oueslati, Vice-President of the Competition Council, Tunisia • Mohamad Cheikhrouhou, Rapporteur Generale at the Competition Council, Tunisia • Lama AlZughaibi, Legal Specialist, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
11:45 a.m.–1:00 p.m. (Muscat Time – UTC+4) Meeting venue: Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat <i>Format: Open session / Hybrid</i>	<p>Session III: Competition Law and Policy and SMEs</p> <p>Session coordinator: UNCTAD</p> <p>Competition policy is essential for a level playing field that provides opportunities for micro, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and promotes increased competitiveness and consumer welfare. In this session, experts will introduce best practices and specific guidance to promote SME competitiveness and assistance following the COVID-19 crisis.</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juan Luis Crucelegui, Chief, Capacity Building and Advisory Services, Competition and Consumer Policies Branch, UNCTAD <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evelyn Olmedo, International Relations Officer. Superintendencia of Competition, El Salvador (<i>online intervention</i>) • Tebelelo Pule, Chief Executive Officer, Botswana Competition Authority (<i>online intervention</i>)

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alanoud Alfahad, Director of the Monopolistic Investigations Department, Competition Protection Authority, Kuwait
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Lunch break
<p>2:00 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. (Muscat Time – UTC+4)</p> <p>Meeting venue: Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat</p> <p><i>Format: Open session / Hybrid</i></p>	<p>Session IV: Competition Provisions in Trade Agreements</p> <p>Session coordinator: UNCTAD</p> <p>During this session, experts will highlight the importance of assigning adequate competition provisions in trade agreements and set out best practices for the implementation of preliminary reforms to maximize the utilization of trade agreements.</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teresa Moreira, Head, Competition and Consumer Policies Branch, Division on International Trade and Commodities, UNCTAD <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna Caroline Muller, Legal Affairs Officer, WTO’s Intellectual Property, Government Procurement and Competition Division (<i>online intervention</i>) • Regina Vargas, Superintendent of Competition, El Salvador (<i>online intervention</i>) • Nathalie Khaled, Economic Affairs Officer, ESCWA
2:45 – 3:00 p.m.	Coffee break
<p>3:00 – 4:00 p.m. (Muscat Time – UTC+4)</p> <p>Meeting venue: Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat</p> <p><i>Format: Closed session / Hybrid</i></p>	<p>Discussion and Closing Session</p> <p>Session coordinators: ESCWA and partners</p> <p>The closing session will include a discussion on future support provided by ESCWA and its partners to member States in competition policy and enforcement. Participants will agree on the main intervention areas needed to advance competition in the Arab region.</p>