



القمة العربية لريادة
الأعمال والمشروعات
الصغيرة والمتوسطة

ARAB SMEs SUMMIT

من الصمود للازدهار From resilience to prosperity

Marrakesh, 12-14 December 2023

مراكش، 12-14 كانون الأول/ديسمبر

Arab SMEs Summit 2023: From Resilience to Prosperity

Marrakech 12-14 December 2023

Overview

The Arab SMEs Summit is a regional platform to empower small and medium enterprises in the Arab region, improve their performance, and expand their potential beyond borders. The [first Summit](#) was organised in Amman in October 2022, and brought together more than 800 participants from around the world, including a select of entrepreneurs and stakeholders. It also featured an SMEs exhibition and a zone for opportunities. The Summit was widely received, especially as it witnessed several commitments from leading regional and international agencies to contribute to supporting Arab SMEs in a more coordinated and coherent approach.

The Arab SMEs Summit 2023 builds on this momentum and aims at further establishment of such a regional enabling environment, and an annual platform for the empowerment of SMEs in the Arab region and beyond, within the larger framework of supporting the regional SDGs and sustaining human development especially among youth and women.

The 2023 Summit will be held on 12-14 December in Marrakesh, in partnership with the Moroccan Ministry of Economic Inclusion, Small Business, Employment and Skills. It will be a unique international and regional event of its kind at all levels (organization, partnerships, attendance, exhibition, award, coverage, and impact). Additionally, the event will seek to mobilize commitments of international, regional, and national entities to support Arab SMEs in terms of financing, capacity building, and business services.



1. Introduction

The Arab SMEs Summit 2023 will be the largest gathering of SMEs in the Arab region; it will bring together some 1,300 selected participants, including entrepreneurs, investors, business influencers, political leaders, economists, journalists, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and donors, to discuss regional and international business opportunities for Arab SMEs.

The Arab SMEs Summit 2023 theme is “From Resilience to Prosperity.” It will focus on supporting Arab SMEs who survived the Covid pandemic and economic challenges by investing the qualities of resilience in SMEs to drive forward development and prosperity.

The Summit will be held in Marrakech, on 12-14 December 2023, over full three days, with the support of the Moroccan government and the auspices of its Leadership.

2. Objectives

The Summit aims to enhance partnerships and expand SME opportunities across the Arab region and internationally by achieving the following objectives:

- Inspire Arab entrepreneurs with regional and global business models and success stories.
- Enhance SME access to opportunities and strategic partnerships to drive their growth at the regional and international levels.
- Provide networking and clustering opportunities to foster strategic alliances.
- Facilitate targeted capacity-building to Entrepreneurs, SMEs, and government entities.
- Exchange of knowledge and experiences between Arab policymakers to strengthen the business-enabling environment for SMEs.



3. Work Streams

The Arab SMEs Summit is organized along six main work streams, namely: Inspirational Talks, Interactive Workshops, Policy Dialogue, SMEs Exhibition, Opportunities Zone, and Side Events; in addition to the cross-cutting work streams such as networking, business matchmaking, and partners commitments.

Work Stream 1. Inspirational Talks

Each day will start with a panel discussion that showcases inspiring businesses from the Arab region and globally, followed by a high-level panel discussion to elaborate on the practical interventions needed to strengthen SME access to opportunities and provide an overview of best practices in the region on strategies, policies, and support programs.

Work Stream 2. Interactive Workshops

Subsequently, parallel capacity-building workshops and interactive discussions will take place daily to provide hands-on tools and methodologies to empower Arab SMEs. The workshops will be delivered under six main tracks: 1) Green Technologies and Business Models; 2) Empowering Creative Industries; 3) eCommerce Acceleration; 4) Export Readiness for SMEs; 5) Business Finance for SMEs; 6). How to Start a Business; Each track will host six intensive workshops over two days. Participants who attend the six workshops on a specific track will get an official certificate at the end of the Summit.

Work Stream 3. Policy Dialogue

The Summit will invite 110 policymakers from all over the 22 Arab States for a 3-day intensive discussion and road mapping exercise for enhancing the national entrepreneurial enabling environments. The Policy Dialogue will act as a regional platform for leaders from the public and private sectors to advocate inclusive policies and strategies required to support Arab SMEs.

The policy dialogue will facilitate an interactive two-day workshop to discuss the significant challenges facing the Arab States in supporting resilience and actionable solutions for prosperity.

Work Stream 4. SMEs Exhibition

The Exhibition seeks to create synergies and foster collaboration among Arab SMEs. In addition, it will provide an interactive platform for SMEs to increase networking, exposure, and outreach.

The SMEs Exhibition in 2023 will host **200 exhibitors** under five main specializations: 1) Green Businesses; 2) eCommerce; 3) Edu-Tech; 4) Frontier Technologies; and 5) Creative Industries.



Work Stream 5. Opportunities Zone

The Opportunities Zone will exhibit financing, capacity building, and networking opportunities provided by **50 regional business enablers**, funding organizations, intergovernmental organizations, international NGOs, VCs, and SMEs supporting institutions. Additionally, the Summit will invite **100 regional and international investors** to meet up with the attending SMEs and facilitate their business matchmaking through one-to-one meetings.

Work Stream 6. Side Events

The Summit will host **10 side events** to be facilitated by regional and international organizations to promote regional initiatives, programs, and partnerships. The side events will be managed will have different setups and organization based on the purposes of these events and target audience.

Cross-Cutting Work Streams

The Summit will feature vital cross-cutting work streams to announce new programs and commitments, promote partnerships, and scale up regional and international outreach.

Commitments: building on the 2022 Summit's commitments of 130 million USD of fund for Arab SMEs, the 2023 Summit aims to reach 200 million USD of funds and support for Arab SMEs through ESCWA and its partners.

Partnerships Promotion: the 2023 Summit will have a dedicated booth for announcing national, regional, and international partnerships and programs for supporting Arab SMEs.

Outreach: The Summit 2023 activities will be livestreamed, and virtual formats will be provided to most activities and events where applicable. The Summit will target 50 regional and international media outlets (e.g., Forbes, CNBC, Bloomberg, ...etc.) in addition to reaching out to more than 750,000 users via different social media channels.



4. Agenda

Day 1: Scaling Up and Internationalization (12 December 2023)

| Time | Room and modality | Subtheme: Scaling Up and Internationalization | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|----------------|--|--------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. | Registration and coffee reception | | | | | | | | |
| 9:00 – 9:30 a.m. | <u>The Minister's Auditorium</u> <i>Opening Ceremony</i> | <i>Opening Note & Keynote Speakers</i> | | | | | | | |
| 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. | <u>The Minister's Auditorium</u> <i>Inspirational showcases of successful businesses</i> | Inspirational panel: businesses beyond borders. Showcases of inspirational businesses from the Arab region that crossed borders and scaled up regionally and internationally. | | | | | | | |
| 10:30 – 11:30 p.m. | Coffee Break and Networking | | | | | | | | |
| | Parallel workshops, sessions, and side events | Policy Dialogue | SM Es Pitching | Green Technologies and Business Models | Empowering Creative Industries | eCommerce Acceleration | Export Readiness for SMEs | Business Finance for SMEs | How to Start a Business? |
| 11:30 – 12:30 p.m. | | Part 1 | Group 1 | Part 1 | Part 1 | Part 1 | Part 1 | Part 1 | Part 1 |
| 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. | | Part 2 | Group 2 | Part 2 | Part 2 | Part 2 | Part 2 | Part 2 | Part 2 |
| 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. | Light Lunch and Snacks | | | | | | | | |
| 2:30 – 4:00 p.m. | | Part 3 | Group 3 | Part 3 | Part 3 | Part 3 | Part 3 | Part 3 | Part 3 |



Day 2: Promoting Arab Technologies (13 December 2023)

| Time | Room and modality | Subtheme: Promoting Arab Technologies | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---|--|---------------|--|--------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. | Registration and coffee reception | | | | | | | | |
| 9:00 – 9:45 a.m. | <u>The Minister's Auditorium</u> <i>Inspirational showcases of successful businesses</i> | Inspirational panel: transformative technologies and disruptive business models. Showcases of inspirational technology leaders from the Arab region. | | | | | | | |
| 9:45 – 10:30 a.m. | <u>The Minister's Auditorium</u> <i>Thought leadership discussion and ways forward</i> | High-level panel: Leveraging Technology for SMEs Growth and Empowerment. Discussion on how technology can drive growth for Arab SMEs and pave the way for economic empowerment and prosperity in the region. | | | | | | | |
| 10:30 – 11:30 p.m. | Coffee Break and Networking | | | | | | | | |
| | Parallel workshops, sessions, and side events | Policy Dialogue | SMEs Pitching | Green Technologies and Business Models | Empowering Creative Industries | eCommerce Acceleration | Export Readiness for SMEs | Business Finance for SMEs | How to Start a Business? |
| 11:30 – 12:30 p.m. | | Part 4 | Group 4 | Part 4 | Part 4 | Part 4 | Part 4 | Part 4 | Part 4 |
| 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. | | Part 5 | Group 5 | Part 5 | Part 5 | Part 5 | Part 5 | Part 5 | Part 5 |
| 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. | Light Lunch and Snacks | | | | | | | | |
| 2:30 – 4:00 p.m. | | Part 6 | Group 6 | Part 6 | Part 6 | Part 6 | Part 6 | Part 6 | Part 6 |



Day 3: Access to finance and supporting services (14 December 2023)

| Time | Room and modality | Subtheme: Access to finance and supporting services |
|--------------------|---|---|
| 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. | Registration and coffee reception | |
| 9:00 – 9:45 a.m. | <u>The Minister's Auditorium</u> <i>Inspirational showcases of successful businesses</i> | Inspirational panel: impact investment and support initiatives. Inspirational showcases of impact investment, innovative financial models, and supporting initiatives that empowered SMEs across the Arab region. |
| 9:45 – 10:30 a.m. | <u>The Minister's Auditorium</u> <i>Thought leadership discussion and ways forward</i> | High-level panel: Regional opportunities for accessing finance and support services. Discussion on how regional and international finance and support services can bolster the growth and expansion of Arab SMEs. |
| 10:30 – 11:30 a.m. | Coffee Break and Networking | |
| 11:30 – 1:30 p.m. | <u>The Minister's Auditorium</u> Closing Ceremony | ESCWA Awards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announcement of the "Arab SMEs Competition" Winners. Announcement of the "Arab Innovation Platform Challenge" Winners. Regional and National Commitments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESCWA commitments for supporting Arab SMEs. Partners commitments for supporting Arab SMEs: (UNIDO, ITC, UNCDF, UNCTAD, ECA, AGFUND, Arab Fund, IsDB, PRIMA, Among others) National commitments for supporting Moroccan MSMEs. Announcement of the Arab SMEs Summit 2024 |



5. Expected Outcomes

The 2023 Summit aims to:

- Mobilize funding opportunities and supporting services worth 200 million USD to support SMEs in the Arab region.
- Facilitate 100+ investment opportunities for Arab SMEs.
- Enhance SMEs' access to opportunities and strategic partnerships to drive their growth at the regional and international levels.
- Support government institutions and the private sector to expand SMEs' potential.
- Influence policymakers to strengthen the business-enabling environment for Arab SMEs.

6. Participation and Logistics

(The below applies for all tracks except for the Policy Dialogue invitees, a high-level closed by-invitation only event)

To participate in the Summit, Registration is free but mandatory. The Summit offers different registration options and tracks, tailored to the specific needs of each audience category. Because participation is highly rewarding, most participants cover their travel and accommodation expenses on their own, while UN ESCWA and the Moroccan Government support in visa arrangements and requirements. Participant SMEs are offered a complimentary dedicated booth to showcase their businesses, and will have access to several accredited training courses to choose from. Additionally, matchmaking and pitching events are scheduled to ensure highest levels of effectiveness and impact. The event also features a dedicated opportunities zone, a policy dialogue track, and a range of different side events organized by our partners, including for example UN ECA, OECD, ILO, and UNCTAD.

All registration is online at the following link:
<https://depar.unescwa.org/dashboard/asmes-2023-registration-guide>

7. Additional Information

For further inquiries and information, please get in touch with Mr. Kareem Hassan, Coordinator of the Arab SMEs Summit at kareem.hassan@un.org

