



TIJARIS



THE MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL AND INTRA-OIC TRADE AND INVESTMENT

SPECIAL REPORT

FROM HERITAGE TO MARKET THE RISE OF HANDICRAFTS IN OIC NATIONS

INTERVIEW



H.E DR AHMAD KAWESA SENGENDO

Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs
at the OIC

«The OIC is currently working
to modernize the 1981 OIC Investment
Agreement in order to further stimulate
investment in its member states.»

THE HALAL ECONOMY IN OIC COUNTRIES
A STRATEGIC LEVER FOR GLOBAL GROWTH

SUCCESS STORIES OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
SUNCLAY TOGO, THE QUIET STRENGTH OF A VISION
ROOTED IN THE PAST AND FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE!

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The Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (I.C.D.T), headquartered in Casablanca, Morocco, serves as a privileged instrument for promoting trade among the Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Its objectives include :

- Encouraging the development of regular trade exchanges among Member States.
- Promoting investments aimed at trade development.
- Contributing to the promotion of productions from Member States and facilitating access to foreign markets.
- Promoting commercial information.
- Assisting Member States in the field of trade promotion and international trade negotiations.
- Assisting businesses and economic operators.

I.C.D.T's actions revolve around six main areas :

TRADE PROMOTION

- Encouraging contacts between businessmen from Member States.
- Promoting the products of Member States, including through regular Islamic Fairs and specialized exhibitions.
- Assisting Member States in establishing and organizing Export Promotion Centers.
- Providing advisory and expertise services to Member States in trade promotion matters.

TRADE INFORMATION

- Collecting and disseminating trade data.
- Developing remotely accessible trade databases.
- Assisting Member States in establishing Documentation Centers and Commercial Information networks.

INVESTMENT PROMOTION

- Encouraging intra-OIC investments.
- Promoting foreign investments in OIC Member States.
- Encouraging partnerships among economic operators from Member States.
- Providing advisory and expertise services to Member States, particularly in export-oriented investment promotion.

STUDIES AND RESEARCH

- Publishing an Annual Report on intra-Islamic trade.
- Conducting sectoral studies on products and markets.
- Studying ways and means to alleviate trade barriers among Member States.

TRAINING

- Organizing seminars and training programs.
- Assisting Member States in creating a pool of experts in various fields of trade development.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

- Assisting Member States in trade negotiations.
- Preparing and organizing intra-OIC trade negotiations.

EDITORIAL



Leveraging the Handicraft Sector to Promote Local Industry Internationally

Long regarded primarily as a cultural and heritage-based activity, the craft sector is increasingly recognized as a strategic economic driver within OIC member states. By integrating ancestral know-how with innovation, crafts contribute to job creation, strengthen local production systems, and support economic diversification. Across the region, the traditional distinction between crafts and industry is gradually diminishing, as artisanal workshops evolve into small-scale production units supplying components, designs, or semi-finished products to industrial firms. In sectors such as textiles, leather goods, furniture, and jewelry, artisans play a pivotal role in local value creation.

Morocco provides a clear illustration of this transformation. The craft sector accounts for nearly 7% of national GDP and employs approximately 2.4 million people, almost 20% of the workforce. Supported by certification programs, digitalization initiatives, and partnerships with the private sector, crafts have become an integral component of the country's industrial ecosystem, generating around USD 1.1 billion in export revenues in 2023.

Similarly, in Türkiye, the leather and design industries draw on dense networks of artisans to deliver high value-added production that blends tradition with contemporary aesthetics. These experiences highlight the sector's vast potential. By better integrating artisans into industrial value chains, countries can curb import dependence, enhance regional competitiveness, and build strong local brands rooted in cultural identity. Crafts can thus become both a pillar of economic sovereignty and a driver of sustainable development.

Realizing this potential, however, depends on addressing several structural challenges, including the expansion of access to vocational training and finance, the improvement of quality

standardization, and the reinforcement of export promotion mechanisms. Innovation and digitalization represent powerful levers for modernizing the sector, provided they enhance productivity and market access while preserving the authenticity that underpins the distinctive value of craft products.

The second edition of the Commercial Exhibition, to be held in Casablanca from December 18 to 28, 2025, aims to help countries address these challenges and act as a catalyst for the development of a sector that is vital to local industries across OIC member states. The exhibition showcases the talents of the OIC region and provides a platform for professionals, institutions, and private-sector actors to exchange ideas through thematic conferences held alongside the event, focusing on sustainable innovation, design trends, and strategies for accessing international markets. Each afternoon, the exhibition will also celebrate the cultural diversity of the OIC region through dance, traditional music, and artistic performances reflecting its rich heritage.

In a global context where differentiation and sustainability are increasingly decisive, the craft sector constitutes a strategic asset for the future of OIC member states. Strategic investment in this sector can enable countries to strengthen local industries, valorize traditional know-how, and enhance their positioning on the global economic stage. ■

Mrs. Latifa Elbouabdellaoui,
Director General of ICDT

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The Secretary General of the OIC met with His Excellency Marshal Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, in Abu Dhabi

HIS EXCELLENCY MR. HISSEIN BRAHIM TAHA, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC), PARTICIPATED IN THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF CHAD'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (CHAD CONNECTION 2030) DURING THE HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON TRADE AND INVESTMENT, HELD IN ABU DHABI ON NOVEMBER 10 AND 11, 2025, INITIATED BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES AND THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE, BUDGET, ECONOMY, PLANNING, AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHAD.

On this occasion, His Excellency Marshal Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, officially launched the "Chad Connection 2030" plan and reaffirmed the stability and promising potential of his country to the international investment community. For his part, His Highness Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, welcomed this initiative and reiterated the United Arab Emirates' commitment to establishing sustainable development partnerships with the Republic of Chad and other African nations.

Notably, the Chad Connection 2030 project is designed to lead the country toward sustainable

economic and social transformation and attract more than \$30 billion in investments in various strategic sectors of the economy, including agriculture, livestock, tourism, fishing, oil, and mining.

On the sidelines of the Forum, Marshal Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, received His Excellency Mr. Hissein Brahim Taha at his residence in Abu Dhabi on November 12, 2025. During their meeting, they discussed the efforts made by the Republic of Chad in the field of trade and investment promotion and stressed the need to strengthen cooperation ties between the Republic of Chad and the OIC, especially in relation to the implementation of the "Chad Connection 2030" Plan. ■



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

The OIC Reaffirms its Commitment to Girls' Empowerment and Rights

On the occasion of International Day of the Girl Child, celebrated on October 11 under the theme “The Girl I Am, The Change I lead: Girls on the Frontlines of Crises,” the OIC reaffirmed its renewed commitment to protecting and advancing the rights, dignity, and potential of girls throughout the Islamic world. The OIC acknowledges that in times of conflict, climate shocks, displacement, and social instability, girls often bear a heavy burden, despite being a symbol of hope, resilience, change, and positive transformation within their families and communities.

The OIC is pursuing its efforts through the Action Plan for the Advancement of Women (OPAAW) to establish a comprehensive framework for strengthening access to education, health, economic opportunities, and social inclusion for girls, in full harmony with Islamic values and international standards. In addition to this plan, the Jeddah Document on Women’s Rights in Islam, adopted in November 2023, and the Jeddah Convention on the Rights of the Child in Islam, currently being finalized, reflect both the commitment and the will of the OIC and its member countries to promote justice and equity among women and men in member countries and also to protect the rights of girls amid a world of instability and uncertainty. ■

JEDDAH Meeting of the Working Group to Review the Roadmap for the OIC Reform Process



The meeting of the Working Group entrusted with reviewing the roadmap for the OIC reform process was held on November 9, 2025, at the OIC General Secretariat, chaired by H.E. Ambassador Cenk Uraz, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Türkiye to the OIC. During the meeting, discussions focused on reform initiatives aimed at strengthening the Organization. In addition, the participants developed an agenda for holding follow-up meetings to ensure the implementation of effective and sustainable reforms.

Furthermore, the delegates discussed best practices for streamlining and simplifying the resolution process, enhancing its coherence, and ensuring that resolutions remain focused, applicable, and consistent with the Organization’s priorities and mandates. ■



AMMAAN OIC Health Ministers Call for Enhanced Collaboration

THE 8th SESSION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE OF HEALTH MINISTERS WAS HELD IN AMMAN, HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN, ON OCTOBER 8 AND 9, 2025, UNDER THE THEME "HEALTH: OUR SHARED RESPONSIBILITY."

The Conference brought together Ministers of Health, heads of delegations, representatives of international organizations, and OIC institutions for two days of high-level deliberations, technical discussions, and the adoption of key resolutions, including the Amman Declaration, aimed at strengthening the health sector in OIC Member States.

On this occasion, H.E. Dr. Ibrahim Bdour, Minister of Health of Jordan, stressed the importance of joint Islamic action to address the main challenges related to the health sector. For his part, the Secretary General of the OIC, H.E. Hissein Brahim Taha, represented by H.E. Ambassador Aftab Ahmad Khokher, Assistant Secretary General for Science and Technology, affirmed that health is a priority sector for OIC countries and a central pillar of prosperity and sustainable development. The Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), H.E. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, praised the excellent partnership between

his institution and the OIC in jointly addressing global health challenges in recent years.

Member states welcomed the progress achieved under the Strategic Health Program 2014–2023 (SHPA) and agreed to extend it for a further two years, covering the 2025–2027 period. During the discussions, countries also urged closer cooperation to tackle both communicable and noncommunicable diseases, while strengthening health systems to reduce maternal and infant mortality.

The Conference concluded with the adoption of the Amman Declaration, reaffirming the importance of resilient, people-centered primary health care, robust supply chains, and integrated health workforce planning. These measures, delegates agreed, are essential to ensuring equitable access to basic health services for more than 1.9 billion people across the Islamic world. ■



DOHA 6th Session of the Islamic Conference of Labour Ministers

THE 6th SESSION OF THE CONFERENCE OF LABOUR MINISTERS OF OIC MEMBER STATES WAS HELD IN DOHA FROM 15 TO 16 OCTOBER 2025, UNDER THE HIGH PATRONAGE OF HIS EXCELLENCY SHEIKH MOHAMMED BIN ABDULRAHMAN BIN JASSIM AL THANI, PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE STATE OF QATAR.

Held under the theme “Local Experiences, Global Achievements: Success Stories from the Islamic World,” the Conference brought together Labour Ministers from OIC countries, along with representatives of institutions and civil society. Discussions focused on enhancing workforce competitiveness and skills development, as well as promoting decent and productive employment across OIC member states. The high-level meeting provided a platform for sharing best practices in employment policies, skills development, social protection, and labour market inclusion, while also strengthening cooperation among countries and encouraging innovative responses

to shared labour market challenges. At the invitation of the OIC General Secretariat, the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) took part in the Conference, presenting its initiatives aimed at the economic empowerment of women and youth and at fostering job creation for groups most affected by unemployment. On the sidelines of the meeting, Dr Mamoudou Bocar Sall, Deputy Director General of the ICDT, held talks with Ms Noora Mubarak Al-Awlan, Director of the Research and Studies Department at the Qatar Chamber of Commerce, as well as with representatives of Qatar Exports at the Qatar Development Bank (QDB), regarding their par-

ticipation and sponsorship of the Mali Investment Forum.

The Conference also marked the signing of the Statutes of the OIC Labour Centre by Labour Ministers from several member states, including the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Sierra Leone, the Republic of Yemen, the Lebanese Republic, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and the Republic of Indonesia. With these new signatures, the total number of signatory countries rose to 32, underscoring the commitment of OIC member states to strengthening cooperation and solidarity in the fields of labour and employment. ■



The OIC Participates in the 2nd World Summit on Social Development in Doha

ORGANIZED BY THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND BRINGING TOGETHER HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT, THIS SUMMIT AIMS TO ACCELERATE ACTION TO ERADICATE POVERTY, PROMOTE FULL EMPLOYMENT AND DECENT WORK, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION.

The objective of the 2nd Summit is to bridge persistent gaps, reaffirm the global commitment to social development, and give new impetus to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The second edition of this Summit, held from November 4 to 6 in Doha, was attended by heads of state, government officials, and several delegations from international organizations, including the OIC, which was represented on this occasion by a high-level delegation led by Dr. Amina Al-Hajri, Director General of Cultural, Social, and Family Affairs, alongside H.E. Ambassador Hameed Opeyero, Permanent Observer of the OIC to the United Nations in New York.

On this occasion, the OIC delegation participated in sessions and workshops that addressed key issues in the areas of social

empowerment, sustainable development, innovation in social work, and strengthening international partnerships. Among the highlights of this meeting, the session organized by the Organization for Digital Cooperation (ODC) entitled “Data-driven strategies to bridge social development gaps and accelerate the establishment of an inclusive digital economy” and the side event organized by the Sultanate of Oman entitled “Women at the heart of development: from empowerment to impact.” The delegation also attended the session organized by the Doha International Family Institute entitled “The Family as the Cornerstone of Development and Social Integration: A Strategic Approach for a Sustainable Future.”

In addition, Dr. Amina Al-Hajri participated in a high-level event entitled “Women’s Entrepreneurship and Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development,”

attended by prominent figures and women leaders from the United Nations and international organizations, as well as ministers. The participants discussed the role of women leaders in digital transformation, the challenges they face, and proposed solutions to strengthen their participation in this field.

In a series of statements, the OIC General Secretariat affirmed that its participation reflects the Organization’s commitment to supporting international efforts to advance sustainable development and strengthen social justice, in line with OIC Vision 2025. The Secretariat also expressed its sincere appreciation to the State of Qatar for its warm hospitality and the high quality of the summit’s organization, commending Doha’s efforts to foster dialogue and enhance international cooperation on social development issues. ■



The OIC Participates in the 6th Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh

AT THE INVITATION OF HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCE ABDULAZIZ BIN TURKI AL-FAISAL, MINISTER OF SPORT OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA AND PRESIDENT OF THE ISLAMIC SOLIDARITY SPORTS ASSOCIATION, THE OIC SECRETARY GENERAL, H.E. MR. HISSEIN BRAHIM TAHA, LED A HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATION TO THE 6TH ISLAMIC SOLIDARITY GAMES, HELD IN RIYADH FROM 7 TO 21 NOVEMBER 2025 UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE CUSTODIAN OF THE TWO HOLY MOSQUES, KING SALMAN BIN ABDULAZIZ AL SAUD.

At the opening ceremony, the OIC General Secretariat, represented by H.E. Ambassador Tariq Ali Bakheet, Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian, Cultural, Social and Family Affairs, praised the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its efforts to support joint Islamic action under the wise leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Prince Mohammed bin Salman. He also commended the Kingdom's continued support for sport in the Islamic world and internationally, stressing that the

Islamic Solidarity Games are the largest sporting event in the Islamic world and one of the world's most significant sporting events, embodying the values of unity, solidarity and Islamic fraternity.

It is worth noting that this edition brought together more than 3,000 athletes from OIC member states, alongside ministers of youth and sports and senior officials from regional and international organizations working in the fields of sport and youth. It should also be recalled that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was the first country to host the Islamic Solidarity Games, in 2005. ■

OIC Governmental Experts Review the New Ten-Year Programme of Action (2026–2035)

THE GROUP OF GOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS FROM OIC MEMBER STATES MET IN JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA, FROM 17 TO 20 NOVEMBER 2025 TO CONTINUE REVIEWING THE ORGANIZATION'S NEW TEN-YEAR PROGRAM OF ACTION FOR THE 2026–2035 PERIOD. THE FOUR-DAY MEETING AIMED TO FINALIZE THE DRAFT PROGRAM AHEAD OF ITS SUBMISSION TO THE NEXT ISLAMIC SUMMIT FOR ADOPTION.

In his opening address, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Türkiye to the OIC, His Excellency Ambassador Cenk Oraz, expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the representatives of the Member States and the Organization's institutions for their active participation in the series of meetings aimed at drafting the new ten-year programme of action. He also presented the roadmap and the work undertaken by the OIC General Secretariat in this regard.

Speaking on behalf of OIC Secretary General Hissein Brahim Taha, the Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs, H.E. Dr Ahmad



Kawesa Sengendo, said the new draft programme is intended to serve as a comprehensive roadmap for the coming decade, strengthening joint Islamic action across key strategic and priority areas for OIC member states. He also praised countries whose proposals were successfully incorporated into the draft under discussion.

Throughout these working sessions, the discussions were characterized by the active participation of representatives of the Member States, leading to constructive exchanges on the priorities to be accorded to the various areas of the socio-economic development of the Member States. Political and economic issues generated the highest number of interventions.

On this occasion, the Chair of the meeting, His Excellency Ambassador Cenk Oraz, commended the considerable efforts undertaken by the OIC and its subsidiary organs. He nevertheless underscored that the effective implementation of

certain actions requires additional financial resources. In this regard, he urged Member States to regularly fulfill their financial contributions to the OIC and its subsidiary structures.

At the conclusion of the third day, and following the review of all programmed areas, it became apparent that certain issues required further consultations between representatives and their respective capitals. In order to enable the OIC to incorporate all proposals and amendments into the programme prior to its submission for final validation, the Chair proposed convening an additional meeting at a date that would take into account the Organization's upcoming commitments, notably the Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs scheduled to be held in Azerbaijan in 2026, while leaving the choice of the date to the Organization.

At the invitation of the OIC General Secretariat, a delegation from the Islamic Centre for Develop-

ment of Trade (ICDT), led by the Centre's Deputy Director General, Dr Mamoudou Bocar Sall, took part in the meeting and contributed to the finalization of the Ten-Year Programme of Action. This participation enabled the Centre to closely follow the development of the OIC's strategic framework for the next decade. Discussions underscored the central importance of economic and trade issues among member states, offering the ICDT an opportunity to further strengthen its role and contribution within the Organization.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the ICDT delegation held several bilateral discussions with representatives of member states and other participants to consolidate partnerships and explore opportunities for joint initiatives. In addition, a meeting was held with the Director General of the OIC Department of Science and Technology to discuss the organization of activities aimed at promoting the health sector. ■



5 DECEMBER, BAKU, AZERBAIJAN



OIC Cultural Festival Held in Baku

THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC), IN COOPERATION WITH THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN, ORGANIZED THE OIC CULTURAL FESTIVAL UNDER THE THEME “BAKU CREATIVE WEEK”, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN BAKU FROM 5 TO 11 DECEMBER 2025.

The OIC delegation was led by the Assistant Secretary-General for Cultural, Social and Humanitarian Affairs, Ambassador Tarig Aly Bakheet. The opening ceremony was held in the presence of Azerbaijan’s Minister of Culture, Mr. Adil Karimli, and was attended by Ministers of Culture and delegations from 50 countries, representatives of OIC-affiliated and international institutions, as well as more than 5,000 visitors.

During the ceremony, Ambassador Tarig Aly Bakheet delivered a speech on behalf of OIC Secretary-General Hissein Brahim Taha, in which the Secretary-General expressed his sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Azerbaijan for hosting the Festival, aimed at positioning Baku as a global hub for creative industries. He also praised Azerbaijan’s continued support for the OIC, particularly in the fields of culture,

humanitarian action, economic cooperation and the exchange of best practices, as well as its efforts to establish a platform celebrating the rich and diverse heritage of the Islamic world.

In his message, the OIC Secretary-General highlighted the central role of cultural activities in strengthening interpersonal and institutional ties and in building networks of cooperation and sus-



tainable partnerships. He further stressed the importance of cultural exchanges in enriching the shared heritage of the Islamic world, overcoming misunderstandings, strengthening collective identity, and reinforcing unity and solidarity within the wider OIC community.

During this event, several activities and exhibitions were held with the aim of promoting creative and innovative industries related to art, culture, and education in the OIC Member States. These include the «Creative Village Expo», showcasing artistic installations, handicrafts, works by emerging artists,

and workshops led by creative collectives; the Cultural and Creative Industries Expo, which brought together dozens of projects in design, cinema, fashion, digital art, animation, and emerging technologies; the Islamic Calligraphy Expo, prepared in collaboration with the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA); the I2C Startups Expo; Omarket (Orient Film Market); the AI4Art Creative Workshop; and the CulTech Platform, which presents technological solutions for the cultural sector in the Islamic world. Alongside these festivities, roundtables, screenings, and forums were organized, covering cinema, thea-

tre, music, fashion, dance, game design, animation, and digital creativity, as well as a high-level meeting of Ministers of Culture of OIC Member States to discuss joint initiatives and new directions for cooperation in the field of creative and innovative industries.

At the conclusion of the Festival, the participating countries, together with the OIC General Secretariat, adopted a Communiqué outlining a shared vision of the OIC Member States to strengthen cooperation in the creative industries, promote joint initiatives, and inject new momentum into cultural diplomacy. The Communiqué also underscores the strategic importance of developing future partnerships and sustaining collaborative efforts among Member States.

At the invitation of the OIC General Secretariat, a delegation from ICDT, led by Mr. Ismael Taqui, Head of the Trade Facilitation Department took part in this event. In the context of “Baku Creative Week,” ICDT organized a panel entitled “The Role of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) in Promoting Trade and Investment in OIC Member States.” The session, held on Tuesday, 9 December, enabled the various speakers to explore strategies for leveraging the potential of CCIs to enhance investment and intra-OIC trade in services. On this occasion, the discussions were moderated by Mr. Samir Hajibay, Associate at Caucasus Ventures, and featured representatives from the ICDT, SESRIC, and IRCICA, as well as investors from several countries.

The ICDT presentation was delivered by Mr. Birane Mamadou Salane and focused on the theme “Promoting Intra-OIC Trade and Investment in Creative Services: Building Value Chains and Market

Integration.” On this occasion, Mr. Salane stated that the ICDT considers Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) to be crucial drivers of economic diversification and essential to the achievement of intra-OIC trade objectives. The ICDT’s strategy for promoting creative services and investment is based on two main pillars:

1. Promotion of Investment Flows: ICDT organizes ICDT Invest Days forums to channel capital specifically toward enterprises across various sectors, including CCIs.

2. Trade Promotion (Specialized Exhibitions): ICDT identifies CCIs as a key area for promotion through specialized exhibitions and trade missions.

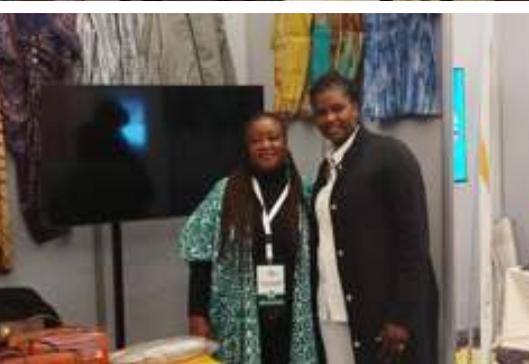
The panel also featured the participation of representatives from SESRIC, IRCICA, and a representative of the consulting firm Venture Partner TREOO VC, which specializes in the evaluation and mentoring of startups. SESRIC (Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries) addressed the topic of human capital development and capacity building for sustainable creative industries, as presented by Ms. Alya Serifi Ortak, Technical Cooperation Officer. Mr. Muhammed Efdaluddin Kilic of IRCICA (Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture) highlighted the importance of innovation in craftsmanship and calligraphy in OIC Member States. Ms. Mine Dedekoca, representative of Venture Partner TREOO VC, focused on the criteria sought by investors when assessing entrepreneurial projects for financing, particularly productivity and creative performance in the workplace environment.



In addition to the panel, ICDT coordinated and sponsored the participation of young entrepreneurs in this OIC cultural festival, a core component of its capacity-building activities (Capacity Building and Empowering Creative Entrepreneurs). The ICDT’s action falls within the framework of the Creative Village (MYEXPO) initiative, which provided an exhibition space for traditional arts, handicrafts, and products from cultural and creative industries. The Centre’s sponsorship supported four CCI startups operating in the fields of fashion, film production, photography, and painting. Their booths were loca-

ted in the “Invest 2 Create Zone.” These startups included Junior Charly Kodjo (Côte d’Ivoire), founder of Instant2VieStudio; Massira Touré (Mali), CEO of WIDOO Design; Wendpagnagde Cécile Marie Claire Sebgo (Burkina Faso), founder of CLO Design; and Ibrahima Mbengue (Senegal), founder of Iboo Photography.

The meetings constituted a key component of the mission. Networking opportunities enabled young entrepreneurs to present their projects and services to financiers, potential partners, and members of the public



visiting the stands. In particular, they received visits from the Director of Communication of the OIC and from Dr. Ameth Diallo, Director of the OIC Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC). The festival also facilitated networking among peers from other countries, with a view to encouraging collaboration and promoting co-production projects. ■

The 9th Meeting of the ACMOI



At the invitation of the OIC General Secretariat, a delegation from the ICDT, led by Mrs. Latifa Elbouabdellaoui, participated in the 9th Annual Coordination Meeting of OIC Institutions (ACMOI), held at the OIC Headquarters in Jeddah on 10 and 11 December 2025. This annual meeting brought together OIC institutions, OIC Assistant Secretaries General, Heads of Departments of the General Secretariat, as well as staff from various relevant departments.

At the opening ceremony, His Excellency Dr. Ahmad Kawesa Sengendo, OIC Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs, delivered a statement highlighting the importance of the meeting at a time when Member States are facing multiple socio-economic and other challenges, including climate change, food insecurity, population displacement, and

conflicts. In this regard, His Excellency noted that the discussions would focus on the current status of implementation of activities across various sectors, as well as on priorities for the coming year, in line with the relevant OIC resolutions.

During the meeting, participants reviewed the implementation of activities for the current year agreed upon at the previous meeting in December 2024 and proposed concise projects for 2026. They also assessed progress made in implementing OIC activities in the political, economic, scientific, technological, cultural, sports, family, information, human rights, and humanitarian fields. Finally, the participants formulated recommendations on new projects, with a view to submitting them to the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA), scheduled to be held in Azerbaijan in 2026. ■



The 10th Halal Trade Fair in Istanbul

As part of their activities aimed at promoting trade and investment among OIC Member States in the Halal industry sector, the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (CIDC) and the Standards and Metrology Institute for Islamic Countries (SMIIC), under the patronage of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, organized the 10th edition of the OIC Member States Halal Products Exhibition, held from 26 to 29 November 2025 at the Istanbul Expo Center, in parallel with the 11th World Halal Summit 2025, under the theme: “Strengthening the Halal Industry through Innovation and Excellence.”

The exhibition aimed to bring together stakeholders from the Halal value chain seeking business

and partnership opportunities in OIC Member States. It also provided a platform for companies and industry players to promote their products and services and to foster investment in the Halal sector.

The product categories on display covered Halal tourism, Islamic finance, textiles and modest fashion, cosmetics and personal care, agri-food and beverages, food processing, machinery and equipment, and packaging.

The exhibition recorded the participation of more than 500 national and international exhibitors and approximately 40,000 visitors. It also featured the organization of B2B meetings between businesspeople from OIC Member States, as well as Country Business

Forums, dedicated Global Seller spaces, and Modest Fashion shows.

The opening ceremony was marked by a message delivered by His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, President of the Republic of Türkiye, in which he reiterated Türkiye’s commitment to developing the Halal industry and to positioning the country as a key hub and turning point for economic operators from OIC Member States.

Taken together, the ICDT underscored the importance of the Halal industry as a sector with strong potential for trade among OIC Member States, as well as its significant contribution to the development of intra-OIC trade. ■



PARTICIPATION OF ICDT AT THE 41st MINISTERIAL SESSION OF COMCEC IN ISTANBUL

A Strategic Platform for Strengthening Economic Cooperation within the OIC Area

AT THE INVITATION OF THE COMCEC, ICDT TOOK PART IN THE 41ST MINISTERIAL SESSION, HELD FROM 1 TO 4 NOVEMBER 2025 IN ISTANBUL. THIS MAJOR EVENT, HELD UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE, BROUGHT TOGETHER MINISTERS OF ECONOMY, TRADE, FINANCE, AND PLANNING FROM THE 57 MEMBER STATES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION, AS WELL AS FINANCIAL AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTIONS FROM THE ISLAMIC WORLD.

This annual meeting took place in a complex global context marked by geopolitical tensions, rising logistics costs, volatility in energy markets, and challenges related to digital and climate transitions. Amid this juncture, COMCEC plays a central role as a platform for coordinating economic policies among Member States, with a view to increasing intra-OIC trade, enhancing economic competitiveness, supporting SMEs, and strengthening economic governance.

During the 41st Session, Ministers and Heads of Delegation reviewed the progress achieved in the economic domain across the OIC region and adopted several resolutions aimed at strengthening national economies and advancing their regional and international integration. Besides, Member

States reaffirmed their commitment to deepening economic cooperation, promoting solidarity, and pursuing reforms designed to enhance competitiveness and economic resilience within the OIC area.

Among the activities organized on the sidelines of the ministerial meeting, the following may be highlighted:

- This year’s ministerial working breakfast, which focused on opportunities for supporting Syria.
- The OIC Business Leaders’ Summit under the theme “The Private Sector as a Strategic Partner for Sustainable Development,” organized by the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development (ICCD).



- A panel on “Revitalizing Economic Activities in Rural Areas in Syria.”
- A panel on “The Role of Institutional and Human Capacities in the Reconstruction Process: The Case of Syria.”
- A panel on “Mobilizing Econo-

mic and Social Development Dynamics: The Case of Syria.”

During this ministerial meeting, the Centre was represented by Mrs. Latifa Elbouabdellaoui, Director General of the ICDT. On this occasion, she met with delegations

from Burkina Faso, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, as well as representatives of the ITFC, the IOFS, and the IRCICA, to discuss bilateral cooperation and projects of common interest contributing to the socio-economic development of the OIC region. ■

The ICDT Promotes Investment in Global Health Through Islamic Finance



AS PART OF ITS INSTITUTIONAL MANDATE TO PROMOTE TRADE AND INVESTMENT AMONG THE MEMBER STATES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC), THE ISLAMIC CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE (ICDT) ORGANIZED A HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE IN RIYADH ON PROMOTING INVESTMENT IN GLOBAL HEALTH THROUGH ISLAMIC FINANCE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) FOR THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN.



The meeting sought to promote investment and enhance the mobilization of innovative financing—particularly through Islamic finance instruments—to support the development and strengthening of health systems, and brought together representatives from governments, international organizations, multilateral financial institutions, the private sector, philanthropic foundations, and academia.

The roundtable was organized in a context marked by a significant decline in official development assistance, limited investment in community health projects, rising health needs, and increasing pressure on the health systems of OIC and WHO Member States. The discussions highlighted the need to diversify and enhance the sustainability of health financing sources.

The meeting explored the opportunities offered by Islamic finance—particularly social sukuk, waqf, zakat, and takaful—to support universal health coverage and strengthen the resilience of health systems in Member States.

The exchanges underscored that Islamic finance represents an important additional source of funding that remains underutilized in the health sector. With assets exceeding USD 5 trillion, this financing model demonstrates strong compatibility with the principles of equity, solidarity, and investment in the real economy.

On this occasion, Mrs. Latifa Elbouabdellaoui, Director General of the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), emphasized that the Centre's participation in this roundtable is fully aligned with its mandate to promote trade and investment in support of the sustainable development of the Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. She recalled that the health sector has become a major strategic area with strong investment potential, calling for increased capital mobilization, particularly through innovative instruments that are compliant with the principles of Islamic finance.

Moreover, the Director General highlighted the importance of strengthening synergies among public actors, financial institutions, the private sector, and technical partners, in order to transform growing health needs into bankable projects capable of attracting sustainable, high-impact investments.

H.E. Mrs. Latifa Elbouabdellaoui further noted that the exchanges held during this meeting helped identify promising prospects for future cooperation, particularly within the framework of the Coalition for Islamic Financing of Health, which the ICDT intends to actively support in order to foster the emergence of structuring partnerships and high-impact investment initiatives for the benefit of Member States. Finally, ICDT reaffirmed its readiness to support Member States through experience-sharing programs, institutional and private-sector capacity-building initiatives, and the mobilization of funds within the OIC system, as well as with its regional development partners. ■



First Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Agreement on the Protection and Promotion of Investments

THE ICDT PARTICIPATED IN THE FIRST MEETING OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES TO THE AGREEMENT ON THE PROMOTION, PROTECTION, AND PROMOTION OF INVESTMENTS AMONG THE MEMBER STATES OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION, HELD FROM 26 TO 28 OCTOBER 2025 AT THE OIC HEADQUARTERS IN JEDDAH.

The meeting focused on reviewing the Agreement to ensure that it fully contributes to the development of investment flows within the OIC region.

Over two days of deliberations, discussions centered on the findings of a study conducted by experts mandated by the OIC General Secretariat, namely Professor Makane Moïse Mbengue (University of Geneva),

Dr. Amr Hedar, an Egyptian international consultant, and Dr. Hassan Ali, with a view to identifying shortcomings in the Agreement. After presenting the international context in which the revision process is taking place, as well as international best practices concerning legal provisions for investment protection and promotion, the experts put forward a set of recommendations aimed at addressing legal gaps in

certain provisions of the Agreement, stimulating investment, and fostering sustainable growth across the OIC region.

To conclude, Member States were invited to submit their comments on the study at the national level and to schedule a subsequent meeting in order to continue deliberations on the next stages of the Agreement's revision process. ■



The 4th OBIC Session Strengthens the Capacities of Trade and Investment Stakeholders within OIC Member States

THE 4th EDITION OF THE CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMME ENTITLED “THE ROLE OF CREDIT INFORMATION AND UNIQUE IDENTIFIERS IN SUPPORTING INVESTMENT AND TRADE DECISION-MAKING” WAS SUCCESSFULLY HELD IN CASABLANCA FROM 24 TO 26 NOVEMBER 2025.

Jointly organized by the Islamic Corporation for the Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC), the The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB Group), The Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), Afreximbank and the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), the event brought together senior representatives from Ministries of Investment and Investment Promotion Agencies from several Organization of Islamic Cooperation Member States. In her opening address, Mrs. Latiifa El Bouabdellaoui, Director Ge-

neral of the ICDT, emphasized the strategic importance of reliable credit information systems and unique identifiers in enhancing transparency, reducing risks, and facilitating intra-OIC trade and investment. She reaffirmed the ICDT’s commitment to supporting Member States in the development of digital tools serving SMEs, investors, and financial institutions.

Over the course of three days, participants explored key concepts related to credit reporting, the use of unique identifiers, and emer-

ging digital platforms such as the Africa Trade Gateway. The session also promoted the exchange of experiences and strengthened inter-institutional cooperation.

Through OBIC, ICDT and its partners aim to accelerate economic integration and strengthen the resilience of the economies of OIC member countries.

The ICDT’s presentation, delivered by Mr. Charif El Hamraoui Sbai Expert at ICDT, focused on the efficient use of trade and investment statistics for the benefit of economic operators in OIC countries. ■

□ INTERVIEW

H.E DR AHMAD KAWESA SENGENDO

Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs at the OIC



The OIC is currently working to modernize the 1981 OIC Investment Agreement in order to further stimulate investment in its member states.



1. As Assistant Secretary General for Economic Affairs at the OIC, could you tell us more about the mandate of the OIC and the key initiatives undertaken by your department to promote intra-OIC trade and investment?

As the world's second-largest intergovernmental organization after the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) plays a strategic role in representing the political, economic, technological, cultural, humanitarian and social interests of its 57 Member States. Established in 1969 to bring together the Muslim nations across the planet, the OIC has evolved into a multidimensional platform for cooperation, solidarity, and global advocacy. Its main attributions span diplomacy, social, technological, humanitarian action, economic integration, and the preservation of Islamic values, making it an essential actor in addressing challenges within the OIC region.

At the heart of the OIC's mission lies its responsibility to protect and defend the interests of the Muslim world. The Organization provides a unified voice on international issues, ranging from conflicts and political crises to questions of sovereignty and human rights. Through its framework of summits, ministerial meetings, and specialized committees, the OIC works to promote peaceful conflict resolution, support state sovereignty, and mediate dispute settlement among Member States. The Organization also functions as an essential diplomatic actor, coordinating common positions at the United Nations and other global arenas, ensuring that the priorities of the Muslim world are represented in multilateral debates.

When it comes to the Department of Economic Affairs, our core activities revolve around the overall coordination of implementation of the OIC economic programs, as approved by Member States at the relevant OIC Summits, Conferences of Foreign Ministers, relevant sectoral ministerial conferences and intergovernmental meetings. The Department of Economic Affairs also advises the OIC Secretary-General on issues of socio-economic development in Member States and fostering partnerships with governments in our countries and international organizations. Furthermore, the Department helps Member States find common ground and elaborate plans of action in support of their respective national developmental programs. Within the context of this agenda, the Department addresses crucial issues in the various sectors of the economy which affect people's lives and livelihoods in Member States. In addition, the Department coordinates the activities of the relevant OIC institutions working in the economic domain with a view to ensuring adherence to OIC policies and synergy as well as avoiding overlapping and duplication of efforts and resources.

Among the main priorities of our department are the promotion of intra-OIC trade and investment; supporting economic integration, diversification and industrial development; strengthening of food security; developing transport corridors and enhancing digital connectivity; supporting the private sector engagement, and capacity-building programs, among others. The primary objective of all those efforts is to foster a more integrated economic space within the OIC region and to contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth.

As a result of the measures taken at the OIC level, including execution of the Trade Preferential System of OIC (TPS-OIC), in 2025, we reached a 20.36% when it comes to intra-OIC trade. More than half of our Member States reached this goal. Indeed, the good news is that as of today we have a group of countries mostly from the Gulf and Asian regions, which have exceeded our expectations with a percentage revolving around 25 to 35% of intra-OIC trade in 2025. Some OIC Member States in Africa, which are also part of the LCOWAS and WALMU, have also exceeded the average rate thanks to regional integration.

In the domain of promoting investment, it should be emphasized that FDI inflows into the OIC countries followed a growing trend in recent years. In 2024, FDI inflows were recorded at US\$210 billion, which was 27.3% higher than the US\$150 billion in 2023. The share of OIC countries in global FDI inflows reached all time high of 13.9% in 2024. In addition, the OIC is currently working on modernizing the 1981 OIC Investment Agreement to further stimulate investment in its Member States.

2. The OIC Program of Action 2026–2035 is a key component of your department's work. Could you share more details about this program and its expected impact on enhancing trade and investment within the OIC region, especially in African Member Countries?

The OIC Program of Action for 2026–2035, which is presently being finalized for adoption by the next session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Azerbai-

jan, is a successor to the OIC Program of Action 2016-2025. The latter guided the OIC towards a decade of strengthened solidarity and sustainable development, and it focused on development across 18 priority areas, including enhancing intra-OIC trade and investment.

Building on past achievements, the new Program of Action for 2026—2035 seeks to deepen intra-OIC trade and investment, foster human development and advance science, technology, and innovation. Key priorities include strengthening intra-OIC economic and trade cooperation with the aim of achieving economic integration, enhancing education and healthcare, empowering youth and women, and protecting cultural heritage, among others. The program also emphasizes climate action, digital transformation, and regional collaboration. Through coordinated efforts, strengthened institutional frameworks, and public-private partnerships, the OIC aims to achieve a more connected, resilient, and prosperous Islamic world by 2035.

When it comes to the OIC African countries, I believe that the OIC Program of Action 2026-2035 sets out a broad program of actions to strengthen trade and investment across its Member States on the African continent and will definitely complement the AfCFTA goals. This is because the many OIC Member States on the African continent have acceded to both 'AfCFTA and TPS-OIC. By promoting economic integration, facilitating cross-border investment, and supporting industrial and digital development, the program will increase intra-OIC trade, attract foreign investment, and create



THE 2026-2035 PROGRAMME OF ACTION SHOULD CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO PROMOTING INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMIC RESILIENCE OF THE OIC'S AFRICAN MEMBER STATES.

sustainable economic opportunities. Key measures should include enhanced trade facilitation, investment promotion platforms, capacity-building programs, and

targeted support for MSMEs owned by women and young economic operators. Job creation and economic empowerment of the youth, who are the majority

in Africa, will be a central objective of the economic program for African Member States. Overall, this program will bring inclusive growth and regional economic resilience in Africa.

3. In your opinion, what should be the priority areas of cooperation between the OIC, its institutions—particularly the ICDT—and Member States in order to further enhance intra-OIC trade and investment?

To enhance Intra-OIC trade and investment requires a more integrated, practical, and results-oriented cooperation action plan between the OIC, its institutions, particularly the ICDT, and our Member States.

First, trade facilitation must remain a priority for us. Despite the strong political commitment, non-tariff barriers still limit trade flows within the OIC region. We therefore need to promote mutual recognition of standards and certifications, and support customs modernization and digitalization. In this context, it is necessary to increase and intensify efforts towards enhancing intra-OIC trade through effective implementation of the TPS-OIC agreements, better trade promotion, reducing barriers, improving logistics, leveraging trade finance and increasing digital integration. The ICDT plays an important role in translating policy commitments into operational support on the ground.

Second, we must place stronger emphasis on investment promotion, especially in regional value chains. Trade alone is not sufficient; we need cross-border investments that build regional value chains in key sectors such as agriculture, health, energy, logistics, and manufacturing. Strengthening cooperation among national investment pro-



THE ICDT PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE
IN TRANSFORMING POLITICAL COMMITMENTS
INTO CONCRETE ACTIONS ON THE GROUND.

motion agencies and facilitating partnerships between public and private actors across Member States is crucial.

Third, digitalization and trade intelligence offer major opportunities to deepen integration. Digital trade platforms, e-Phyto, e-TIR and better access to market information can significantly reduce transaction costs and improve SME participation in intra-OIC trade. Leveraging the great potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in all socio-economic endeavors of the OIC Members will accelerate intra-OIC trade and productivity.

Finally, none of this can be achieved without strong institutions and human capital. Capacity-building, policy dialogue, and the exchange of best practices remain central pillars of OIC cooperation. Institutions such as the ICDT are well positioned to support Member States in this regard.

In summary, our objective is to enhance political stability through definitive, sustainable and resilient economic impact on the ground—by strengthening coordination, mobilizing finance, engaging the private sector, and ensuring that OIC cooperation delivers tangible benefits for our economies and our people. ■



SPECIAL REPORT

FROM HERITAGE
TO MARKET
**THE RISE OF
HANDICRAFTS
IN OIC
NATIONS**



The handicrafts sector across the Middle East and Africa stands as one of the most vivid expressions of cultural heritage within the OIC region. From finely woven carpets and hand-tooled leatherwork to carved wooden pieces, metalwork, pottery, jewelry, and textiles, these products embody centuries of artistic mastery and serve as living archives of local identity. Middle Eastern craftsmanship often reflects the influence of Islamic art—geometric patterns, calligraphy, and architectural motifs—while African artisanal traditions are distinguished by their vibrant colors, symbolic designs, and the use of natural materials such as clay, beads, fibers, and wood.

Beyond their aesthetic value, handicrafts play a vital socioeconomic role. They provide livelihoods for millions of artisans, many of whom are women and rural workers, and contribute significantly to community resilience. At a time when global consumers increasingly favor authenticity, sustainability, and ethically sourced goods, the handicrafts industry is attracting renewed international interest. This shift aligns naturally with artisanal production methods in the OIC region, which rely on environmentally friendly materials, traditional techniques, and low-carbon processes using palm leaves, wool, jute, wood, and natural dyes.

Yet, despite strong potential, the sector faces structural challenges. Fragmented value chains, limited access to export markets, and competition from mass-produced items continue to constrain growth. In response, governments, NGOs, and international institutions are multiplying initiatives aimed at strengthening artisans' capabilities, improving product quality, expanding digital access, and connecting local creators with global buyers. These ongoing efforts underscore the sector's strategic importance for economic diversification, inclusive growth, and cultural diplomacy across OIC member states.

Global Handicrafts Market Size

The global handicrafts market has expanded significantly over the past decade, driven by rising consumer interest in authenticity, cultural heritage, and sustainably produced goods. Estimates for 2024 place the market's value between USD 738 billion and USD 1.1 trillion, depending on the scope and definition of artisanal products. Most convergent analyses indicate that the market is now firmly above the USD 1 trillion threshold, underscoring its importance as one of the



world's largest cultural and creative industries.

Looking ahead, global market size is projected to grow robustly. According to recent data, the industry is expected to reach USD 987.54 billion by 2030 at a CAGR of 4.97%, while other broader assessments forecast an expansion to USD 1.29 trillion by 2033, reflecting a higher CAGR of 8.8% in segments such as eco-friendly crafts, personalized goods, and digitally enabled sales channels. This divergence illustrates the sector's fragmented landscape: mature markets exhibit moderate growth, while emerging regions—particularly in Asia and Africa—are experiencing accelerated expansion.

The Asia-Pacific region remains the global powerhouse, accounting for 36.36% of total market share in 2024. Countries such as India, China, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines continue to dominate production, supported by large artisan populations, well-established craft traditions, and strong export capabilities. Demand for woodware, handprinted textiles, metal crafts, embroidered goods, ceramics, and imitation jewelry continues to shape global trade flows.

Growth trends are also strongly influenced by shifting consumer preferences. As buyers increasingly favour products that are hand-made, eco-friendly, and locally



MOROCCO'S HANDICRAFT SECTOR: ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL PILLAR

Morocco's handicraft industry is a cornerstone of the country's economy and cultural heritage, generating an estimated annual revenue of \$14 billion (MAD 140 billion), representing 7% of national GDP. Production-based crafts contribute \$9.6 billion, while service-related handicrafts account for \$4.3 billion. The sector comprises 275,000 craft units and 2,063 registered businesses, employing hundreds of thousands of artisans nationwide.

The Fez-Meknes region, a historic hub of craftsmanship, hosts 144,000 artisans and 44,000 units, representing 16% of the national total, and generates \$1.06 billion, or 11% of Morocco's overall handicraft revenue. Exports from Fez-Meknes reached \$14.3 million in 2024, while Morocco's total handicraft exports hit \$111 million, a 3% increase year-on-year, with pottery, carpets, and traditional clothing leading exports.

Beyond economics, the sector sustains cultural heritage, preserves traditional techniques, and empowers rural communities, women, and youth through employment and skills development. Programs linked to major events like AFCON 2025 and the 2030 World Cup aim to promote handicrafts via exhibitions, mobile stands, and dedicated retail spaces, enhancing both domestic and international visibility. Morocco's handicraft industry thus combines cultural preservation, social impact, and economic growth, making it a vital component of the country's development strategy.

sourced, artisans benefit from a growing premium placed on craftsmanship and sustainability. This trend has boosted demand for items produced with organic fibres, natural dyes, recycled materials, and low-impact processes—areas where traditional craft techniques naturally align with sustainability expectations.

E-commerce is another major growth engine. By 2024, 18% of global handicraft sales were estimated to occur through online channels, a figure expected to rise steadily as digital platforms connect artisans directly with global consumers. Online marketplaces have reduced barriers to entry, democratized access to international buyers,

and enabled micro-entrepreneurs to scale their activities without traditional intermediaries.

Despite this positive momentum, structural challenges persist. Competition from mass-produced, low-cost industrial goods continues to pressure price-sensitive segments, especially within home décor and fashion accessories. Nevertheless, handmade items retain a decisive competitive advantage in uniqueness, cultural value, and storytelling—attributes increasingly prioritized by younger, ethically minded consumers.

The sector also plays a significant socio-economic role. In 2024, the African Export-Import Bank

(Afreximbank) reported that its interventions across the cultural and artisanal sectors contributed to 157,714 direct jobs and connected 296,241 farmers and SMEs to regional and global markets. These figures underline the industry's role as a catalyst for employment, community development, and inclusive economic growth, especially in developing economies.

As global demand continues to rise—driven by sustainability, cultural authenticity, and digital access—this momentum directly benefits artisan-rich regions such as the 57 OIC member states, many of which hold deep craft traditions and significant untapped market potential. This global context sets



the stage for understanding the scale and strategic importance of the handicrafts sector across the OIC region.

Market Trends

The global handicrafts sector—and particularly the artisan-rich markets of OIC member states—is undergoing a period of dynamic transformation shaped by shifts in culture, sustainability, technology, and consumer expectations. Several trends are redefining how handicrafts are produced, marketed, and consumed across international markets.

- **Cultural Preservation and Revival of Traditional Techniques:** A major trend shaping the handicrafts landscape is the growing emphasis on cultural preservation, especially across the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia. Governments, cultural institutions, and NGOs are increasingly investing in programs that document, protect, and revive ancestral techniques that risk disappearing due to urbanization and ge-

nerational skill gaps. These include the revival of handwoven textiles, ancestral pottery techniques, and metal engraving traditions deeply rooted in Islamic heritage. Consumers (particularly in Europe, North America, and high-income GCC markets) are showing stronger interest in authentic, culturally rich products that reflect identity and heritage. This rising demand is encouraging artisans to blend traditional craftsmanship with modern aesthetics, creating products that resonate simultaneously with heritage enthusiasts and contemporary buyers. Such efforts reinforce cultural identity while positioning OIC handicrafts more prominently on the global stage.

- **Sustainability and Eco-Friendly Production Practices:** Sustainability has evolved from a niche preference to a global purchasing criterion—and artisans in OIC countries are increasingly aligning with this shift. Producers are adopting eco-friendly, locally sourced materials such as palm leaves,

jute, clay, wool, and natural dyes, reflecting centuries-old sustainable methods. Upcycling and recycling are also gaining importance, with discarded wood, metal, and textiles repurposed into value-added craft products. As global consumers prioritize ethical and environmentally responsible goods, sustainable production significantly enhances the marketability of OIC handicrafts. For many artisans, traditional crafting methods were inherently sustainable; today, this has become a strategic competitive advantage.

- **Digital Transformation and Expansion of Online Markets:** The digital economy is reshaping global handicrafts trade, with artisans gaining unprecedented access to international customers. E-commerce platforms—ranging from global marketplaces to specialized craft-focused portals—enable producers to bypass intermediaries and reach wider markets. According to the European Crafts Alliance (March 2025), 57.58% of surveyed

craftspeople reported using digital tools for communication and customer engagement, a strong sign of the sector's digital acceleration. Online retail is projected to account for an increasing share of global handicraft sales, providing artisans in OIC regions with new revenue streams and visibility.

- **Fusion of Tradition with Modern Design and Technology:** A significant trend is the integration of modern design and digital fabrication tools into traditional craftsmanship. Artisans are increasingly using computer-aided design (CAD), laser cutting, advanced looms, and even 3D printing to refine complex patterns, increase precision, and experiment with new aesthetics while maintaining artisanal authenticity. The same European Crafts Alliance study notes that 69.70% of artisans have adopted digital tools in their creative process, with 35.56% using them extensively. This fusion of heritage and innovation expands product possibilities, appeals to younger consumers, and strengthens the competitive position of handicrafts in global lifestyle and home décor markets.

Market Key drivers

The global handicrafts sector particularly within OIC member countries is propelled by a combination of cultural, economic, and consumer-driven forces. These drivers are accelerating market expansion, reinforcing the industry's relevance in global trade, and strengthening the contribution of artisanal production to sustainable development.

- **Rich Cultural Heritage and a Growing**

Tourism Sector: One of the most powerful drivers of the handicrafts industry is the region's deep cultural heritage, reflected in artisanal traditions that span centuries.



From Moroccan carpets and Egyptian papyrus art to West African beadwork and Sahelian leather goods, handicrafts across OIC regions serve as both creative expressions and integral components of local identity. As tourism rebounds across the Middle East, Africa, and parts of South and Southeast Asia, demand for authentic, culturally meaningful products continues to rise. Tourists increasingly seek distinctive items that capture the essence of their destination, elevating demand for handcrafted goods as souvenirs and collectible

pieces. Cultural festivals, artisan fairs, and international exhibitions further amplify global visibility for OIC crafts. Government-backed programs to preserve and promote traditional craftsmanship—through training, certification, and national heritage initiatives—also strengthen the sector's growth and long-term sustainability.

- **Expansion of E-Commerce and Cross-Border Trade:** Digital transformation has emerged as a major catalyst for the handicrafts market. E-commerce platforms now allow



artisans to reach international buyers directly, by passing geographical constraints and intermediaries. Online storefronts and social media enable craftspeople to showcase their products, narrate the cultural stories behind them, and build personal engagement with global consumers. Cross-border trade agreements within the OIC region, combined with logistics improvements and SME support schemes, have enhanced export potential. These mechanisms widen the market reach of artisans and increase the visibility of OIC handicrafts in global value chains.

- **Rising Consumer Demand for Authenticity and Customization:** A global shift toward unique, personalized, and culturally resonant products is reshaping demand patterns. Consumers increasingly reject mass-produced sameness in favor of items with artistic individuality. According to Amra & Elma LLC (September 2025), 12% of handicraft sales in 2024 came from personalized goods, highlighting

the significance of customization as a value driver. This preference for bespoke items differentiates artisanal products and fuels sector expansion globally.

- **Growing Preference for Sustainable and Ethically Sourced Goods:** Sustainability continues to influence purchasing decisions. Consumers prioritize products aligned with ethical sourcing, fair labor, and environmentally responsible production—areas where traditional handmade crafts naturally excel. According to Fair-trade International's 2024 Annual Report, 58 active projects supported nearly 1.9 million farmers and workers, reinforcing trust and transparency across artisanal value chains. The broader handmade sector's socio-economic weight is considerable: it supports approximately 300 million jobs worldwide (Customcy, February 2025), underscoring its role in livelihood creation, poverty reduction, and inclusive economic growth across OIC member states.

Key Market Challenges

The global handicraft market, despite its cultural richness and economic potential, faces several structural challenges that hinder its growth, which are also prevalent across OIC member states. One of the most pressing issues is the intensifying competition from mass-produced goods. Industrially manufactured items enter the market at significantly lower price points, appealing strongly to price-sensitive consumers. This economic advantage frequently overshadows the unique artistic value, cultural authenticity, and meticulous craftsmanship embedded in handmade products. As a result, consumer demand often shifts toward cheaper alternatives, limiting the market share of genuine artisanal goods.

This shift has tangible economic consequences. In 2024, the artisan manufacturing sector recorded a contraction of -5.5%, a decline sharper than that of the broader craft industry. This signals deep-rooted challenges specific to arti-



sanal producers, who increasingly struggle to compete on price alone. For small craft enterprises, companies which operate informally or with minimal capital—keeping pace with large-scale, low-cost manufacturers becomes a formidable barrier to expansion. This situation restricts their ability to scale production, improve product quality, or reach wider consumer markets, both domestically and internationally. Another significant challenge lies in limited access to modern technology and essential production resources. In various regions across the Middle East, Africa, and Central and South Asia, artisans often rely on outdated tools, inconsistent raw material supplies, and insufficient infrastructure. These constraints not only reduce productivity but also elevate production costs. Without access to quality materials or efficient equipment, artisans struggle to ensure consistency, an increasingly important factor for global buyers. Moreover, many lack opportunities for technical training or design innova-

tion, preventing them from adapting to contemporary consumer preferences. This skill gap further restricts their competitiveness in global markets where trends evolve rapidly. Economic instability adds another layer of difficulty. Currency volatility, inflationary pressures, and political uncertainty in several OIC countries disrupt supply chains and complicate long-term planning for artisans and small enterprises. These conditions often limit the availability of affordable inputs and reduce profit margins. Additionally, despite the rising global appetite for handmade, ethically produced goods, market penetration remains limited, largely due to weak branding, scarce marketing resources, and fragmented distribution channels. Many artisans lack the networks needed to promote their products internationally, resulting in low visibility despite high cultural value.

Overcoming these challenges requires stronger coordination among governments, develop-

ment agencies, and private sector partners to build a more resilient, competitive, and inclusive handicraft ecosystem across the OIC.

Market Segmentation, Customer Profiles, and Sales Channels

The Middle Eastern and African handicrafts market—a key component of the OIC trade ecosystem—demonstrates its dynamism through distinct customer segments and a variety of sales channels that connect artisans with consumers both locally and internationally.

The market can be broadly divided into two primary customer segments: the Residential Segment (B2C) and the Commercial Segment (B2B), each characterized by distinct motivations and purchasing patterns.

The Residential Segment is driven largely by personal consumption, gifting, and home décor. Within this segment, Home Décor En-

enthusiasts increasingly invest in handwoven rugs, artisan pottery, and intricately crafted furniture, seeking to personalize living spaces with culturally rich and unique items. Gift and Collectible Buyers place a premium on authenticity, often purchasing handicrafts during cultural celebrations or festive seasons, attracted by their emotional value and cultural significance. A growing subgroup, Bespoke Consumers, seeks customized products, from personalized jewelry to tailor-made home accessories, reflecting an increasing demand for items that match individual tastes and preferences.

The Commercial Segment leverages handicrafts to enhance brand identity, product offerings, and customer experience. Retailers integrate artisanal goods into their inventory to differentiate from competitors selling mass-produced items. The Hospitality Industry—hotels, resorts, and luxury lodgings—incorporates handcrafted décor, furniture, and gift items to create culturally immersive guest experiences. Meanwhile, Corporate Buyers utilize artisanal products in gifting programs, aligning their brand image with sustainability, craftsmanship, and cultural authenticity.

Key Sales Channels

The handicrafts market thrives through a multi-channel approach that combines traditional, specialized, and digital platforms.

Traditional Channels such as craft fairs and markets remain essential, providing direct interaction between artisans and consumers while offering immediate feedback. These events, often aligned with cultural festivals, attract both local and international buyers seeking authentic products. Specialized Retail Outlets, including artisan

ASIA-PACIFIC REGION AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE GLOBAL HANDICRAFT MARKET

The Asia-Pacific region stands at the forefront of the global handicraft market, fueled by its rich cultural heritage, diverse craftsmanship traditions, and growing domestic and international demand for artisanal goods. Countries such as India, China, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia are renowned for producing textiles, pottery, jewelry, woodwork, and metal crafts, reflecting centuries-old techniques and distinct cultural identities.

Artisans in the region are increasingly blending traditional methods with modern design trends, creating products that appeal to contemporary consumers while preserving heritage. The rise of e-commerce and export channels has enabled these artisans to reach global markets, enhancing visibility and boosting demand. Additionally, the expanding middle class in Asia-Pacific, coupled with heightened awareness of sustainability and ethical consumption, has reinforced the appeal of handcrafted, personalized, and eco-friendly products.

Global retail collaborations highlight this dynamism: in June 2023, Amazon's Amazing Home launched a home décor and furniture range; Target introduced designer-curated accessories in January 2023; Crate & Barrel partnered with Athena Calderone in September 2022 to release exclusive home collections; and Walmart collaborated with Gap in June 2022 on home textile products. These initiatives demonstrate the region's adaptability, creativity, and international reach, cementing Asia-Pacific as a pivotal driver of the global handicrafts market.

boutiques, offer curated collections focusing on particular crafts such as textiles, ceramics, or metalwork, catering to clients who value quality and cultural pedigree.

Digital Transformation has reshaped market accessibility. Online marketplaces and e-commerce platforms allow artisans to overcome geographic limitations, reaching a global customer base. The convenience of online shopping, coupled with growing consumer interest in supporting local artisans, has fueled significant demand and market expansion across OIC countries.

Together, these channels—craft fairs, specialized boutiques, and e-

commerce—ensure that the OIC's artisanal sector remains economically viable, preserving cultural heritage while adapting to contemporary consumer trends.

Handicrafts and Social Empowerment in OIC Countries

The handicrafts sector across OIC countries plays a vital role in improving social conditions for artisans, particularly in rural and underserved areas. By providing steady sources of income, it enables artisans to achieve financial independence and reduces vulnerability to poverty. Women artisans, who often represent a significant



share of the workforce, benefit substantially from participation in this sector. Handicraft activities empower women through skills development, access to financial resources, and market opportunities, strengthening their social status and decision-making influence within households and communities. Handicrafts also preserve cultural heritage, fostering pride and sustaining traditional knowledge that might otherwise be lost to globalization. Initiatives by governments, NGOs, and cooperatives across OIC countries provide artisans with training, infrastructure, and



platforms to reach broader markets. These programs improve livelihoods, promote gender equity, and reinforce local identities, ensuring that the social, economic, and cultural benefits of handicrafts are widely shared across OIC communities. ■



FOCUS ON THE HANDICRAFTS SECTOR IN OIC MEMBER STATES

Event: **The 2nd Commercial Handicrafts Trade Exhibition of OIC Member States**

THE ECONOMIC CAPITAL OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO HOSTED, OVER A TEN-DAY PERIOD, THE 2ND OIC MEMBER STATES HANDICRAFTS TRADE FAIR, ORGANIZED BY THE ICDT IN COLLABORATION WITH ATELIER VITA, FROM 18 TO 28 DECEMBER 2025. THIS LARGE-SCALE INTERNATIONAL EVENT, HELD CONCURRENTLY WITH AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS 2025, BROUGHT TOGETHER ARTISANS, COOPERATIVES, DESIGNERS, INVESTORS, AND PROFESSIONALS FROM THE HANDICRAFTS SECTOR, AS WELL AS SPECIALIZED INSTITUTIONS FROM ACROSS THE OIC REGION.

Handicrafts in OIC Member States today represent a highly labor-intensive sector, employing between 10% and 20% of the workforce in certain African and Asian countries. The sector also makes a significant contribution to job creation—particularly for women and young people—economic diversification, the valorization of local resources, and the upgrading of traditional production through higher value added. Nevertheless, it continues to face recurring challenges, including weak export structures, the lack of standardization, limited access to finance, insufficient digitalization, and increasing competition from industrial products. It was within this context that the Fair was held, with a particular focus on economic diversification in Member States and the promotion of local and creative industries. Through this initiative, the ICDT seeks to revitalize the handicrafts sector across the OIC region, expand market opportunities, strengthen artisanal value chains, promote South–South cooperation, and stimulate investment in handicraft industries, which constitute a key driver of local economies.

This unique platform for promoting and networking handicrafts stakeholders from OIC Member States—hosted by Egypt with Türkiye as Guest of Honour—stood out for its integrated approach, combining exhibitions, business meetings, and training workshops. Dedicated spaces were allocated to cooperatives and master artisans, design and decoration companies, fashion and traditional arts stakeholders, and public institutions responsible for handicrafts promotion. Visitors were able to discover an exceptional diversity of know-how and talent from the Muslim world, including weaving, textiles, fashion and embroidery; terracotta, artistic ceramics and pottery; jewelry and precious metals; for-



ged metals and foundry work; cabinetmaking and carved wood; leather and leather goods; glass arts; calligraphy; culinary arts and well-being; graphic arts and calligraphy; art objects; and innovations stemming from contemporary creative industries in Member States.

On the sidelines of the Fair, B2B meetings, business matchmaking sessions, and networking activities were also organized, and a dedicated export space was made available to cooperatives to support their access to new markets and to revitalize trade flows within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) region. Conferences and panel discussions were likewise held on the following key themes:

- The digitalization of artisanal trades and marketplaces
- Financing for artisanal cooperatives and very small enterprises (VSEs)
- Intellectual property and geographical indications for handicrafts
- The role of women and youth in the creative economy
- Upgrading strategies and certification

- The integration of handicrafts into tourism value chains

These exchanges resulted in concrete recommendations aimed at strengthening the resilience of the handicrafts sector and enhancing its competitiveness within the OIC area and internationally.

By hosting the 2nd Commercial Handicrafts Trade Exhibition of OIC Member States, the Kingdom of Morocco has consolidated its position as a regional and international hub for trade and handicrafts, while reaffirming its expertise in the promotion and valorization of traditional know-how.

Among the Fair's positive outcomes were economic benefits, through the stimulation of exports and investment; cultural gains, through the promotion of the Islamic world's heritage; and social impacts, through the strengthening of cooperative empowerment—particularly those led by women. The Fair also contributed to strengthening intra-OIC trade, which currently stands at around 20%. ■



MOROCCAN
CRAFTSMANSHIP
AT ITS FINEST

THE ZELLIGE WORKSHOP AN ANCESTRAL HERITAGE IN THE BENADIBA FAMILY



Master Said BENADIBA.



Mr. Omar BENADIBA

THE HISTORY OF ZELLIGE DATES BACK TO THE BENADIBA FAMILY, GUARDIANS OF ANCESTRAL EXPERTISE HANDED DOWN THROUGH SEVERAL GENERATIONS.

Since its origins, this refined art has embodied the perfect combination of architectural heritage and exceptional works of art. It all began with Master Said BENADIBA, who at the age of 12 began learning the art of Zellige, devoting his life to mastering the traditional techniques of cutting and assembling pieces of glazed earthenware. Over the years, Master Said established himself as the great

test Moroccan Zellige craftsman, becoming the head of the Zellige Masters of Casablanca and president of the High Chamber of Quality, responsible for overseeing professional training institutes affiliated with the Ministry of Handicrafts. Under his leadership, a production workshop for tiles was created, as well as a high-end design studio to design and create exceptional interiors where

tradition meets modernity. This workshop has brought together the best artisans in Morocco, taking the art of Zellige beyond the borders of the Kingdom.

Master Said's talent and commitment to promoting Moroccan craftsmanship earned him recognition from the late Hassan II in 1967 and a medal from His Majesty King Mo-



hamed VI, who thus established him as a symbol of excellence and expertise in Moroccan craftsmanship. Today, the master craftsman's creations decorate the most prestigious residences around the world, as well as renowned hotels and palaces in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, the Sultanate of Brunei, the United States, Japan, Oman, and many others.

Heir to this rare and precious tradition, Mr. Omar BENADIBA, founder and director of the Atelier du

Zellige, has successfully combined respect for his family and ancestral heritage with a sense of innovation. Under his leadership, Atelier du Zellige has developed a modern approach to this ancient art, combining the demands of traditional craftsmanship with a creative and contemporary vision. Under his guidance, each project becomes a unique expression, where patterns and colors tell a story that is both faithful to its Arab-Andalusian roots and adapted to current sensibilities. Today, the Atelier is much more than a craft workshop; it has become a true ambassador for Moroccan zellige throughout the world.

Like his father, Omar BENADIBA embodies a generation of visionary Moroccan artisans capable of preserving the essence of a centuries-old art form while looking toward the future.

Among the major works produced by the Atelier du Zellige in Morocco and around the world are



the Palace Bin Ennakhil Palmeraie (Marrakesh), the St. Regis Hotel (Tetouan), the Four Seasons Hotel (Casablanca), the Hilton Hotel (Tangier), the Jamai Palace (Fez), the Sultan Qaboos Mosque and the Bait Al Baraka Palace (Muscat, Sultanate of Oman), the Rose Garden of His Majesty King Mohamed VI (Gifu, Japan) and the Moroccan Pavilion (Malaysia). ■

For orders from Atelier du Zellige, please contact us at the following number:

Mr. Omar BENADIBA

Atelier du Zellige
 (Pottery and Zellige Workshop)
 Phone: +33 (0)6 61 40 04 71
 Email: Atelierduzellige@gmail.com



MOROCCAN CRAFTSMANSHIP AT ITS FINEST

WOOD CARVING THE ART OF TAZWAQT



The Lahsaini Brothers in Their Workshops in Fez.

MR. NOUREDDINE LAHSAINI IS A MASTER ARTISAN AND TRADITIONAL ARTIST SPECIALIZING IN WOOD CARVING, KNOWN AS TAZWAQT.

He has practiced this craft in Fez since childhood, having inherited it from his father and ancestors. His brother, Abdelhaye Lahsaini, is a carpenter, and together they work collaboratively, specializing in natural wood carving, particularly for ceilings, doors, and windows in palaces and luxury residences. In addition to architectural ele-

ments, Mr. Nouredine also produces artistic panels. His expertise has been sought internationally, and he has worked on projects in Switzerland, Germany, the former Soviet Union, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Deeply passionate about his craft, he is continually committed to refining and perfecting his art.

The Techniques of Tazwaqt:

Historically, this technique involved mixing traditional dyes with eggs and traditional glue, using either water-based or oil-based paints. Once the work was completed, the paint was treated with a fixative, ensuring its durability. The brush used is traditional, often made from donkey hair.



Characteristics of Tazwaqt:

- **Painted wood:** This art form is an essential element of Moroccan architecture. In cities such as Fez, Marrakesh, and Chefchaouen, wooden works are considered incomplete without Tazwaqt decoration.
- **Colors and motifs:** Tazwaqt is renowned for its rich color palette and intricate motifs—particularly geometric, floral, and linear designs—which reflect the artist's skill and ability to harmonize elements to create a distinctive visual aesthetic.
- **Geometric patterns:** This art is characterized by the use of complex geometric motifs, such as star-shaped formations, marked by a high degree of symmetry and precision in execution.
- **Historical roots:** Tazwaqt is deeply rooted in Moroccan history and has been passed down from generation to generation through the transmission of traditional knowledge and techniques by artisans.
- **Applications:** It is used to decorate various aspects of daily life, including doors, windows, ceilings,

and furniture (tables, chairs, etc.), as well as the façades of houses, mosques, and historic buildings.

The Importance of Tazwaqt in Moroccan Heritage:

Tazwaqt is an integral part of Morocco's cultural heritage and reflects the spirit of creativity and beauty that characterizes Moroccan architecture. Wood carving, or wooden ornamentation, adds a unique and refined artistic touch to various spaces, helping to create a warm and inviting atmosphere in interiors. A source of inspiration for contemporary artists and architects, wood carving has become a growing trend in interior decoration, reaffirming its status as a universal art form.

As part of efforts to preserve this art dating back to the medieval period, the LAHSAINI Brothers run specialized workshops for those who wish to learn more about Tazwaqt techniques. These training sessions are open to both Moroccans and international participants. ■

To take part in their workshops or to place orders with these outstanding artisans, please contact them using the details below:

Mr. Nouredine LAHSAINI

Art Assil
(Wood Carving Sector, Fez)
Phone: +212 661 67 42 18
Email : n.uri@hotmail.fr

Mr. Abdelhaye LAHSAINI

Art Assil
(Wood Carving Sector, Fez)
Phone: +212 674 97 61 96

THE HALAL ECONOMY IN OIC COUNTRIES

A Strategic Lever for Global Growth

DESPITE THREE YEARS OF PRONOUNCED ECONOMIC VOLATILITY AND HEIGHTENED GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE GLOBAL HALAL ECONOMY HAS SHOWN NOTABLE RESILIENCE. SUPPORTED BY A YOUNG, DYNAMIC, AND FAST-GROWING POPULATION ACROSS THE MEMBER STATES OF THE ORGANISATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION (OIC), THE SECTOR HAS CONTINUED TO RECORD STRONG LEVELS OF CONSUMPTION AND INVESTMENT.

In 2023, Muslim consumer expenditure in halal industries amounted to nearly USD 2.3 trillion and is projected to reach USD 3.1 trillion by 2027, representing an average annual growth rate of 4.8%.

This momentum is fueled by several converging factors, including rising disposable incomes, rapid urbanization, increasing digitalization, and growing demand for halal-certified products. Heightened investor interest further underscores the market's attractiveness, while governments are stepping up regulatory and institutional initiatives to structure and support this fast-expanding sector.

The latest report by the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT) on halal trade and investment in OIC member states provides a clear assessment of this opportunity. It measures not only Muslim consumer demand across

key halal sectors but also trade flows and investment trends within halal industries. The objective is straightforward: to offer governments, businesses, and investors a strategic framework to better capitalize on a market that remains largely underexploited. The report emphasizes the need to strengthen governance, enhance the competitiveness of value chains, expand production capacities, and deepen cooperation among member states in order to build a high-performing halal ecosystem.

In the latest edition of the OIC Halal Economy Trade & Investment Index, the United Arab Emirates ranks first among the most dynamic economies, driven by a business-friendly environment and strong inflows of foreign direct investment. Türkiye follows in second place, supported by its strong position in halal travel and modest fashion, closely trailed by Malaysia, which is widely reco-

gnized for its robust regulatory frameworks and innovative ecosystem. Saudi Arabia and Egypt complete the top five.

Commerically, the OIC recorded a \$47 billion deficit in halal products in 2022, although this has decreased by nearly 25% in one year. Halal exports from member countries reached USD 313 billion, dominated by five major players—Indonesia, Bangladesh, Türkiye, Malaysia, and Pakistan—which together account for more than 75 percent of total exports. Imports stood at USD 359.5 billion, with 43 percent coming from the five largest importers: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Indonesia, Türkiye, and Malaysia. Despite these substantial figures, only 27 percent of halal imports within the OIC originate from member states themselves, highlighting a significant untapped potential to strengthen intra-OIC economic integration.

Halal Trade and Investment in OIC Member Countries 2024

Tapping into the halal economy presents a critical macroeconomic opportunity for OIC countries.

USD 1.9 TRILLION

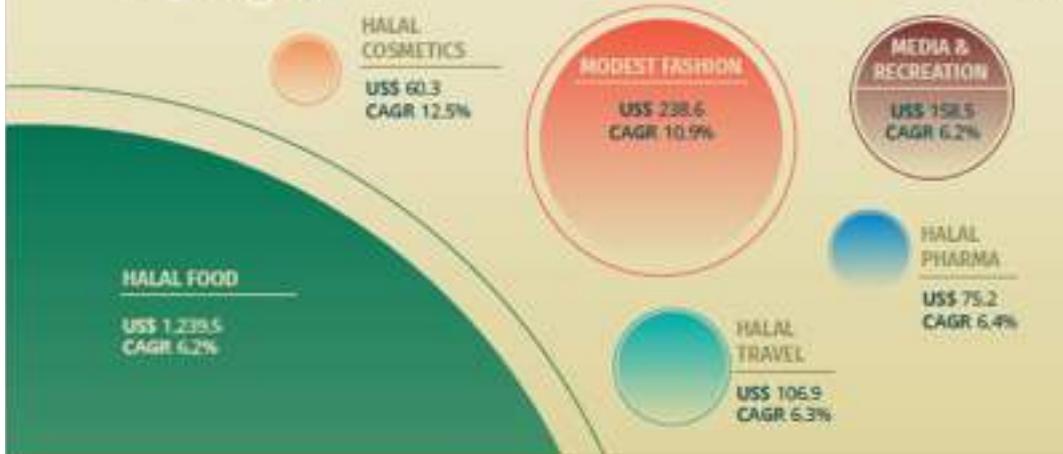
Muslim Consumer spend across Halal Economy Sectors in the OIC (2023)



of Global Muslim consumer spend

48% 2023 2027

USD \$B



The UAE, Türkiye and Malaysia lead the OIC Halal Economy Trade & Investment Index

Country	Food	Clothing	Media and Recreation	Cosmetics	Pharmaceuticals	Travel
1 United Arab Emirates	1	1	1	1	1	1
2 Türkiye	3	2	2	4	3	7
3 Malaysia	2	9	4	3	5	3
4 Saudi Arabia	5	8	5	9	2	2
5 Egypt	8	11	10	7	9	5
6 Indonesia	4	6	8	8	7	19
7 Oman	7	8	3	6	6	13
8 Bahrain	12	13	6	13	10	7
9 Morocco	13	11	12	9	13	4
10 Tunisia	18	18	14	12	18	3

OIC recorded a trade deficit of **USD\$47 billion**, a **25.4% improvement** in the overall halal products trade deficit recorded in the previous report.

TOTAL OIC IMPORTS AND EXPORTS BY SECTOR

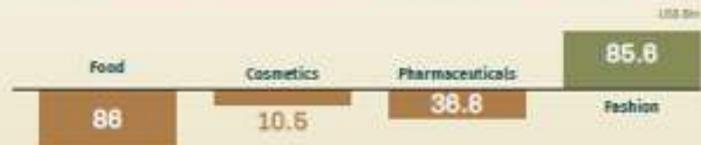


TOP EXPORTERS TO OIC IN 2022



Only 4 OIC MS are part of the top 20 suppliers to the OIC in 2022.

HALAL ECONOMY PRODUCTS TRADE BALANCE IN 2022



TOP CATEGORIES IMPORTED BY THE OIC

HS Code	Description	Largest Importer in OIC
1001	Wheat and meslin	Egypt
3004	Medicaments (for retail use)	Saudi Arabia
1701	Cane or beet sugar	Indonesia
1511	Palm oil and its fractions	Pakistan
1005	Maize or corn	Iran
3002	Vaccines, Human and animal blood	Türkiye
1006	Rice	Iran
1201	Soya beans, whether or not broken	Egypt
402	Milk and cream	Algeria
2304	Oilcake and other solid residues	Indonesia

In 2023, a total of 86 deals were recorded in and related to the OIC across the six sectors of the halal economy. 61 of these deals were disclosed and valued at US\$4.5 billion.

TOP 5 COUNTRIES BY NUMBER OF VC, PE, AND M&A DEALS IN 2023



TOTAL DISCLOSED DEAL VALUE BY SECTOR



TOP 5 DEALS IN THE OIC HALAL ECONOMY

Sector	Deal Type	Target Company	Target Company Country	Investor	Deal Value (US\$ Bln)
Pharmaceuticals	Merger/Acquisition	Ramsay Sirine Darby Health Care	Malaysia	Columbia Asia Hospital	1.21
Travel	Merger/Acquisition	Taradeen Real Estate Company - KPSK	Kuwait	Taradeen Investment Company - KSCP	1.10
Food	Merger/Acquisition	Careem Technologies	United Arab Emirates	ad	0.40
Food	Merger/Acquisition	ChatFood	United Arab Emirates	Deliverect	0.24
Travel	Merger/Acquisition	National Corporation for Tourism and Hotels	United Arab Emirates	Alpha Hotels Holding PJSC	0.19

The year 2023 has also confirmed the growing interest of investors, with 86 transactions recorded in the halal sectors, including 61 deals worth \$4.5 billion. Digital technology plays a key role in this development. Many countries, particularly the Gulf economies, are leading advances in the digitization of cross-border trade, an essential factor in streamlining trade and strengthening competitiveness. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Indonesia, for example, have launched ambitious initiatives to modernize foreign trade procedures. However, some challenges remain: weak institutional capacity in some countries, a lack of technological harmonization, and financing difficulties are still holding back the digital transformation of halal value chains.

Halal food remains a key sector of this economy and remains its main pillar. In 2023, Muslim consumers in OIC countries spent \$1.24 trillion on food products, an amount expected to reach \$1.58 trillion in 2027. The halal food trade deficit remains high at \$85 billion, but growing investor interest in agricultural technologies, food startups, and delivery services is evidence of a sector undergoing profound change. The report highlights the urgent need to harmonize standards and strengthen certification processes to support its development.

The halal pharmaceutical sector continues to grow as well. In 2023, Muslim pharmaceutical spending in the OIC reached \$75 billion and is expected to grow steadily to \$96 billion by 2027. Despite a trade deficit of \$37 billion, the sector attracts significant investment, particularly in Malaysia and Morocco, where major players are strengthening their industrial capacities.

**THE HALAL ECONOMY TODAY
REPRESENTS MUCH MORE THAN A CONSUMER
MARKET SEGMENT: IT IS A STRATEGIC ENGINE
OF GROWTH, A LEVER FOR INNOVATION AND A FIELD
OF OPPORTUNITIES THAT IS STILL LARGELY
UNDER-EXPLOITED FOR OIC COUNTRIES.**

Halal cosmetics are experiencing rapid growth, driven by demand for natural, safe, and ethical products. In 2023, spending reached \$60 billion and is expected to reach nearly \$100 billion in 2027. Once again, the challenges lie in harmonizing standards and structuring ecosystems to support local brands.

Modest fashion is one of the few sectors with a trade surplus in the OIC, with a surplus of \$85 billion in 2023. Consumer spending reached \$278 billion and is expected to grow to \$362 billion by 2027. This performance can be explained by the strong competitiveness of many producing countries and the rise of niches such as modest sportswear.

Halal tourism is also continuing to expand. Muslim travel spending in the OIC reached \$107 billion in 2023 and is expected to rise to \$137 billion in 2027. Major investments in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates confirm the vitality of this transforming market, fueled by digital innovation and the increasing range of offerings.

Finally, the halal entertainment and media industries, driven by growing demand for tailored cultural content, digital platforms,

and immersive experiences, are becoming increasingly prominent. Spending reached \$159 billion in 2023 and is expected to exceed \$200 billion by 2027.

The ICDDT proposes a strategic framework to structure this economy and strengthen the position of OIC member countries on the global stage. Three areas are prioritized: improving regulations related to halal trade, developing competitive halal industries through high-performance ecosystems, and deepening understanding of market dynamics to better guide public policy. With 26 global strategies and 69 sectoral recommendations, the report offers an ambitious roadmap to enable OIC economies to capture more value and become global leaders in the halal economy.

Taken together, the halal economy today represents much more than a religious market segment: it is a strategic driver of growth, a lever for innovation, and underexploited opportunities for OIC countries. With the right policies, targeted investments, and enhanced cooperation, the region has the potential to become a key global hub in this rapidly expanding economy. ■



SUCCESS STORIES OF WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

SunClay Togo, the quiet strength of a vision rooted in the past and focused on the future!

IN TOGO, FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS ARE REDEFINING THE ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE WITH CREATIVITY, RESILIENCE, AND BOLDNESS. FAR FROM BEING MERE ECONOMIC ACTORS, THEY EMBODY A PROFOUND CHANGE: THE REAPPROPRIATION OF AFRICAN KNOW-HOW AND THE CREATION OF SUSTAINABLE VALUES. IN RECENT YEARS, NUMEROUS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INITIATIVES HAVE ENABLED WOMEN TO ACCESS FINANCING, TRAINING, AND SUPPORT NETWORKS THAT ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE GROWTH AND REGIONAL EXPANSION OF THEIR BUSINESSES.

Among these pioneers, Marlène Yempabe NAHM-TCHOUGLI, founder of the SunClay brand, is a shining example. Her journey illustrates the power of a vision born of heritage, fueled by passion, and supported by committed organizations such as the ICDT (Islamic Center for Development of Trade) and ICESCO, the

UNDP, and FEFA-TOGO (Federation of Businesswomen of Togo) through INNOVU'P (the first incubator in Togo dedicated to women's entrepreneurship) and Nanatech_Togo (a program of the Ministry of Digital Efficiency to train and support women's businesses in effective structuring and digitization).

A story born

out of land and tradition:

SunClay, meaning "Clay of the Sun," is much more than a brand of clay-based wellness products and cosmetics: it is a story of intergenerational transmission and faith in nature. The adventure began in 1996, in the heart of Togo, with a family tradition centered around



Marlène Yempabe NAHM-TCHOUGLI
Founder of the SunClay brand

the therapeutic use of clay (drinks, poultices, eye drops, ovules, suppositories, massage balms, masks, etc.). This ancestral knowledge, passed down from mother to daughter, became the foundation of a passion that Marlène would transform, years later, into a life project.

In 2029, SunClay was born, driven by a clear mission: to bring the benefits of clay to everyone through effective, environmentally friendly natural skincare products and to promote clay as an essential everyday health ally. Over time, the brand established itself as Togo's leading expert in clay therapy (trademark registered with OAPI in 2023), combining the richness of African traditions with the modern demands of natural cosmetics.

Each product is designed to be a sensory and therapeutic experience, created to restore balance to the body and mind. From clay masks to scrubs and handmade soaps, as well as wellness treatments, SunClay embodies a way of life and a reminder of what is essential: well-being through nature.

Traditional expertise refined by science:

SunClay draws on unique expertise: a family tradition of producing local treatments tailored to everyday aches and pains using clay therapy and cosmetic formulations. Behind each product lies meticulous work: the selection of clays according to their properties (purifying, soothing, toning, healing, etc.), the combination of precious vegetable oils and natural extracts, and then artisanal processing that complies with international quality and hygiene standards.

This combination of tradition and innovation allows SunClay

to create authentic and effective skincare products designed to restore the body's balance every day and tailored to the needs of African and universal skin types. Clay, a living and generous material, reveals its full power: purifying, balancing, brightening, repairing, regenerating, and remineralizing.

A clear positioning: naturalness, heritage, and innate elegance

Today, SunClay is positioned as a premium eco-responsible brand, rooted in its African heritage with a global outlook. Its identity is based on three pillars:

- Respecting life: natural formulations, free from controversial ingredients.
- Heritage and transmission: continuity between generations and local expertise.
- Conscious elegance: a refined and minimalist approach to beauty.

Distributed online, at international trade shows, pop-up stores, and through exclusive private sales, SunClay has built a loyal community of men and women who value naturalness, effectiveness, and sustainability.

Support from ICDT and ICESCO: a turning point towards international growth:

"ICDT's support has enabled us to further streamline our approach and lay the foundations for solid regional expansion. This partnership has given us confidence in our capabilities and legitimacy," Ms. Marlène Yempabe NAHM-TCHOUGLI, CEO of SunClay Togo.

The year 2023 marks a decisive milestone: SunClay is selected to participate in the ICESCO Youth Innovation Challenge, in partnership with the ICDT based

in Casablanca, Kingdom of Morocco. The project captivates the jury with its global vision, authenticity, and potential impact. In Baku and Susha, Azerbaijan, Marlène received an innovation award recognizing the creativity and added value of her model.

This support paved the way for a grant from the ICDT, enabling the brand to accelerate its development: improving packaging, structuring production, strengthening digital marketing, and initiating international rebranding.

A symbolic rebranding: "SunClay, where the past inspires the future"

In 2025, SunClay entered a new era. With a revisited identity, a new logo, and the slogan "Beyond a Generation Story," the brand affirmed its maturity and international ambition. This rebranding, the result of in-depth work with a local creative team, reflects SUNCLAY's desire to bring together tradition and modernity.

This transformation is accompanied by a reimagined customer experience, featuring a refined aesthetic, sophisticated packaging, and evocative communication that blends nature and emotion, balancing performance with texture and sensory appeal.

Immersive experiences: the "SunClay Private Sale" and "Sweet Alchemy"

True to its human-centered and sensory-driven philosophy, SunClay places a strong emphasis on experiential engagement. Its private sales, hosted in refined settings, invite participants to immerse themselves fully in the world of natural well-being. The most recent event, Live the "Sweet Alchemy" Experience, was held at Le Patio in Lomé, creating a



calming atmosphere that blended music, fragrances, and discovery. This concept seamlessly combines lifestyle, care, and sharing, embodying the essence of the SunClay spirit: a moment of balance and authentic beauty.

The success of this edition has prompted preparations for an upcoming “Sweet Alchemy” experience in Cotonou, underscoring the brand’s regional expansion and growing attractiveness. SunClay’s story is rooted in the vision of an African woman who firmly believes in the power of nature and the value of knowledge transmission. Beyond her own entrepreneurial journey, Marlène champions a collective transformation grounded in sustainable, bold, and supportive female entrepreneurship.

To advance this vision, the Chief Executive Officer of SunClay has called for the establishment of regional exchange hubs for African women entrepreneurs, alongside the development of training programs tailored to local contexts and realities. ■





5th Türkiye–Africa Economic and Business Forum 2025

THE 5th EDITION OF THE TÜRKİYE–AFRICA ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS FORUM (TABEF) WAS HELD ON 16–17 OCTOBER 2025 IN ISTANBUL UNDER THE THEME “STRENGTHENING TÜRKİYE–AFRICA RELATIONS FOR MUTUAL GAINS.”

Organized by the Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEİK) in collaboration with the African Union. The event aimed to deepen trade relations between Türkiye and African countries and to increase the volume of bilateral trade.

The Forum was chaired by H.E. Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and attended by the President of the Republic of Angola and current Chairperson of the African Union, H.E. Mr. João Gonçalves Lourenço. It brought together more than 4,000

participants from across Africa and Türkiye, alongside other high-level figures, including First Lady Emine Erdoğan, the Turkish Minister of Trade, and Ministers of Economy, Trade, and Finance from several African countries.

The Forum highlighted a number of priority sectors for economic cooperation, including agriculture and agri-food industries, renewable energy and mining, automotive manufacturing, textiles, transport and logistics, construction and public

works, defense, and digital technologies. Panels, conferences, exhibitions, and high-level meetings were organized to address issues such as competitive textile value chains, food security and sustainable production, the pharmaceutical industry and medical equipment, and entrepreneurship.

The program also featured bilateral meetings, country presentations (Mozambique, Nigeria, and Egypt), as well as G2B (government-to-business) and B2B (business-to-bu-

siness) sessions aimed at stimulating foreign direct investment, facilitating market access, and promoting the development of long-term large-scale projects.

On the sidelines of the Forum, a special panel dedicated to women's entrepreneurship was also held. Co-chaired by the First Lady of Türkiye, Emine Erdoğan, and the First Lady of Angola, Ana Afonso Dias Lourenço, the session provided a platform for Turkish and African women entrepreneurs to share experiences, explore opportunities for collaboration, and identify concrete ways to strengthen women's participation in leadership positions across the public and private sectors, as well as within civil society.

It is worth mentioning that at the invitation of the Turkish authorities, a delegation from the Islamic Centre for Development of Trade (ICDT), led by Mrs. Latifa El Bouabdellaoui, Director General of ICDT, took part in the Forum. On this occasion, she held several bilateral meetings, notably with H.E. Mr. Mohamed Ali Haweg, Minister of Economy and Trade of Libya; Amany Asfour, President of the Africa Business Council; and Francisca Tatchouop Belobe, Commissioner of the African Union for Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry, and Mining. These introductory meetings provided an opportunity to discuss avenues for strengthening cooperation in areas of shared interest.

In addition, the ICDT delegation actively promoted the Centre's activities and services, visited the exhibition space and the B2B networking sessions, and collected brochures, catalogues, and databases from public and private economic operators participating in the B2B meetings. ■





Gitex Global Dubai 2025

THE 45th EDITION OF GITEX GLOBAL 2025 WAS HELD FROM 13 TO 17 OCTOBER 2025 IN DUBAI, WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF INNOVATORS, EXHIBITORS, STARTUPS, AND PUBLIC- AND PRIVATE-SECTOR INSTITUTIONS FROM MORE THAN 180 COUNTRIES.

This flagship event, which annually showcases leading international innovations in technology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and digital transformation, was organized by the Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC).

This year's edition unveiled the latest developments in artificial intelligence, financial technology, cloud computing, digital health, smart ci-

ties, and startup-driven innovation. The event stood out for the participation of more than 6,800 exhibitors, including 2,000 startups from around the world, as well as 1,200 investors collectively managing assets exceeding USD 1 trillion.

This high-level gathering served as a key platform for entrepreneurs, investors, and technology stakeholders to exchange insights on

cutting-edge innovations, sustainable technologies, digital financing mechanisms, and the future outlook of the global digital economy. GITEX Global 2025 also provided an opportunity for global leaders to engage through panels, workshops, and seminars, addressing the latest technological advances and exploring emerging global investment trends in the technology and digital sectors. ■



9th Future Investment Initiative Conference, 27–30 October 2025, Riyadh – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

RIYADH, THE CAPITAL OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA, HOSTED THE 9th EDITION OF THE FUTURE INVESTMENT INITIATIVE (FII) FROM 27 TO 30 OCTOBER 2025, UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE CUSTODIAN OF THE TWO HOLY MOSQUES, KING SALMAN BIN ABDULAZIZ AL SAUD, AND UNDER THE THEME “THE KEY TO PROSPERITY.”

The conference served as a premier global platform, bringing together international leaders, investors, and policymakers to examine how investment can be harnessed to build a prosperous and sustainable future for humanity.

Discussions focused on the major challenges shaping today’s world, particularly the impact of artificial intelligence and robo-

tics on productivity, wealth creation in the context of growing inequality, geo-economic pressures linked to resource scarcity, demographic shifts transforming labor markets, and strategies for reconciling economic growth with environmental sustainability. Alongside the main program, an Investment Day was organized to facilitate major transactions, promote networking, showcase

emerging technologies, and explore forward-looking entrepreneurial strategies.

This flagship annual event further reinforced Riyadh’s standing as a leading global hub, convening decision-makers and innovators from across the world to translate ambitious visions into concrete strategies shaping the future of global investment. ■



▶ **SENEGAL'S ECONOMIC MOMENTUM: A NEW ERA OF CONFIDENCE AND STRATEGIC SOVEREIGNTY**

With record investment pledges, robust growth figures, and a new development strategy anchored in sovereignty and reform, Senegal is emerging as one of West Africa's most dynamic and trusted destinations for investment.

Senegal is entering a new phase of economic confidence and international visibility. With investment commitments amounting to USD 23.5 billion secured during the second “Invest in Senegal” Forum, held on 7–8 October 2025 in Dakar, the country has reaffirmed its position as one of West Africa's leading investment destinations. The forum attracted over 11,700 participants from 70 countries, including high-level representatives from international financial institutions and the private sector. Fifty-one partnership agreements were signed, covering key sectors such as industrialisation, energy, fertiliser production, and sustainable agriculture. Closing the event, Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko described the outcome as a “renewed wave of international confidence” in Senegal's governance and development strategy under President Bassirou Diomaye Faye.

These results are consistent with Senegal's National Development Strategy (2024–2029), which aims to accelerate structural transformation through value-added manufacturing, enhanced agricultural productivity, and the promotion of

renewable energy. The forum also reinforced Senegal's growing role as a regional platform for public-private dialogue, focused on unlocking financing and expanding job creation opportunities. Recent economic data confirm this momentum. According to the Directorate of Forecasting and Economic Studies (DPEE), Senegal's economic activity (excluding agriculture and forestry) grew by 10.1% month-on-month in July 2025, reflecting the sustained dynamism of its productive sectors.

This growth takes place in the context of the government's new Economic and Social Recovery Plan, “Jubbanti Koom”, announced in August 2025. Conceived as the cornerstone of the administration's Vision 2050, this plan seeks to lift Senegal out of dependency and short-term management by combining strategic planning, fiscal transparency, and economic sovereignty. Estimated at 5,667 billion CFA francs over the 2025–2029 period, it blends pragmatic Keynesianism—through state investment in infrastructure, agriculture, and human capital—with an assertive quest for autonomy in food, energy, and industrial capacity.

The plan's emphasis on internal resource mobilisation and institutional reform aims to restore financial credibility and reinforce national ownership of development policies.

Measures such as the reactivation of the National Public Debt Committee, increased budgetary discipline, and a focus on social outcomes—healthcare, youth employment, and education—illustrate a coherent effort to balance growth and inclusion.

While challenges persist—particularly a public debt level close to 77% of GDP and limited fiscal space—the government's determination to implement reform and sustain investor confidence remains clear. The substantial commitments announced at the Invest in Senegal Forum demonstrate that international partners recognise both the credibility of the new leadership and the long-term potential of the Senegalese economy.

As Senegal consolidates its position as a regional investment hub, its trajectory reflects a broader continental trend toward self-reliant and strategically planned growth. The country's approach—anchored in trust, innovation, and partnership—signals the emergence of a new African economic realism. In the words of Prime Minister Sonko: “What Africa lacks is not genius, but architecture.” Senegal, through its reforms and vision, is providing precisely that architecture—laying the foundations for a decade of sustainable and inclusive development.

Source: The point (Gambia), Financial Afrik

▶ DAKHLA SETS THE PACE FOR AFRICA'S LOGISTICS SOVEREIGNTY

Bringing together more than 300 African decision-makers, the 2025 Dakhla Africa Logistics Forum marked a decisive step toward building an integrated logistics ecosystem aligned with the AfCFTA. Five landmark measures were adopted — from launching a fully digital single window to establishing an African Logistics Council — positioning Dakhla as a strategic Afro-Atlantic hub and a catalyst for the Continent's logistics sovereignty.

During the Dakhla Africa Logistics Forum, held in Dakhla from 20 to 21 November 2025, 300 African decision-makers gathered to build an integrated African logistics ecosystem. Focused on the theme “A Connected, Sustainable and Sovereign Africa”, the Forum brought together African Ministers of Transport and Logistics from West and Central Africa, representatives of regional organizations, development partners, business leaders and technology experts — all united around one ambition: positioning Dakhla as a strategic hub for Afro-Atlantic connectivity and accelerating continental economic integration in direct support of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

On this occasion, five major decisions were adopted: the creation of an African Logistics Council and an observatory, the launch of a di-



gital single window, the establishment of harmonized corridors, and the creation of an academy. The Council and the observatory aim to harmonize policies, monitor the costs and delays that undermine the competitiveness of African companies in foreign markets, and create an effective cooperation framework between States, regions and private operators. The digital single window, inspired by the Moroccan model, will help dematerialize procedures and reduce transit times and costs. Regarding the harmonization of logistics corridors, designed to facilitate the movement of goods and improve access to the sea for landlocked countries, efforts will focus on developing modern, reliable road, port and multimodal links, leveraging the Atlantic Port of Dakhla and the

Tiznit–Dakhla expressway. Finally, the establishment of a Pan-African Academy of Trade and Logistics, headquartered in Dakhla, will strengthen the skills of young professionals and executives, helping fill the continent's gap in qualified human capital.

Within this momentum, public-private partnerships (PPPs) will play a critical role in financing and managing infrastructure, alongside the essential need to harmonize standards, certifications and transport documents. Overall, the strategic decisions adopted at the Dakhla Forum will facilitate the effective implementation of the AfCFTA and help the Continent secure its logistics sovereignty.

Source: TLe360 Afrique



▶ MALAYSIA POISED TO BECOME ASEAN'S SECOND-FASTEST GROWING ECONOMY IN 2025

Malaysia is emerging as Southeast Asia's next growth leader, with major banks raising their 2025 GDP forecasts to around 5%. Strong domestic demand, robust tourism recovery, currency strengthening and strategic diplomacy are positioning the country as ASEAN's second-fastest-growing economy after Vietnam.

Malaysia is on track to become the second-fastest growing economy in ASEAN next year—behind Vietnam—as a succession of major financial institutions revise their growth forecasts upward. The shift marks a renewed confidence in Malaysia's economic trajectory, driven by resilient domestic demand, a stabilising external environment, and increasingly strategic diplomacy.

HSBC Global Investment Research became the latest to raise its

projections, lifting Malaysia's 2025 GDP forecast from 4.2% to 5.0%. The bank cited stronger-than-expected performance across the first nine months of 2025, reduced trade uncertainty, and improving sentiment among global investors. According to HSBC, this places Malaysia on par with Indonesia and just behind Vietnam in the regional growth race.

Other institutions have followed suit. Maybank Investment Bank raised its 2025 outlook from 4.2% to 4.7%, while also adjusting its 2026 projection upward to 4.5%. Standard Chartered Global Research revised its 2025 forecast to 4.7%, highlighting Malaysia's 4.7% expansion during the January–September period. Although it trimmed its 2026 estimate to 4.5% in anticipation of softer global demand, the bank emphasised Malaysia's clear near-term momentum.

Smaller research houses also turned more positive. CIMB Securities increased its 2025 forecast to 4.5%, reflecting both domestic stability and continued investment inflows, though it expects a moderation to 4.1% in 2026 as global trade conditions tighten.

Domestic Strength Anchors Growth

Malaysia's growth outlook is underpinned by strong household consumption, stable employment, and a diversified industrial base spanning manufacturing, services, electronics, green technologies, and the digital economy. Tourism—an essential services component—has fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels. Malaysia now leads ASEAN in welcoming Chinese tourists, reaching more than 20% above its 2019 baseline, supported by a visa-free regime and increased



air connectivity. With the “Visit Malaysia 2026” campaign ahead, analysts expect an even stronger upsurge.

Diplomatic Strategy as an Economic Asset

Malaysia’s economic momentum is reinforced by its pragmatic diplomatic posture. As host of the 47th ASEAN Summit, Kuala Lumpur demonstrated an ability to maintain strategic neutrality while engaging competing global powers—an approach that helped ease external uncertainties during a complex geopolitical year. Analysts view this diplomatic agility as a key factor boosting investor confidence and supporting a more predictable trade environment.



Currency Stability Adds to Optimism

The Malaysian ringgit has strengthened significantly, reaching USD 0.24 per MYR (from va-

lues near USD 0.21 earlier in the year), marking its strongest level in four years. Forecasts from OCBC suggest the currency could appreciate further to around USD 0.24 per MYR by end-2025 and USD 0.25 by 2026.

To conclude, one can say that Malaysia’s growing economic prominence is the result of a synergy of domestic resilience, fiscal discipline, structural reforms, and calibrated diplomacy. While external headwinds may soften export momentum in 2026, the consensus across major institutions is clear: Malaysia is entering 2025 with one of the strongest and most balanced growth profiles in Southeast Asia.

Source: Asean Today, CAN, The Investor (VAFIE Magazine)



OIC AND ICDT AGENDA

▶ **42nd COMCEC Ministerial Session**

November 1-4, 2025, Istanbul, Türkiye

▶ **Regional Workshop on Road Connectivity and its Impact on Regional Trade in Atlantic Africa through the TIR Convention**

November 11-12, 2025, Casablanca, Morocco

▶ **Workshop on the Role of Credit Information in Supporting Trade and Investment Decisions**

November 24-26, 2025, Casablanca, Morocco

▶ **World Halal Summit & Expo**

November 26-29, 2025, Istanbul, Türkiye

▶ **9th ACMOI Meeting**

December 10-11, 2025, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

▶ **2nd Commercial. Hand Craft Exhibition of the OIC Member States**

December 18-28, 2025, Casablanca, Morocco



2^e Foire Commerciale de l'Artisanat des États Membres de l'OIC

2nd Craft Trade Fair OIC Member Countries

Du 18 au 28 déc 2025

ICEC-Ain-Sebaâ, Casablanca





منظمة التعاون الإسلامي

OIC-OCI

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is the second largest inter-governmental organization after the United Nations, comprising 57 member states spread across 4 continents. The Organization serves as the voice of the Muslim world, safeguarding and protecting its interests in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among the world's diverse peoples.

The Islamic Summit, the Council of Foreign Ministers, and the General Secretariat are the main organs of the OIC. The Organization also includes three permanent thematic committees: the Committee on Science and Technology, the Committee on Economy and Trade, the Committee on Communication and Culture, as well as the Al-Quds Committee. Furthermore, the Organization has specialized institutions operating under its umbrella, such as the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). These thematic committees, subsidiary bodies, and affiliated institutions of the Organization play a vital and complementary role by working in various domains.



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