



The Middle East Partnership Initiative

Strengthening Commercial Law and Judiciaries is Critical to Growth of Small and Medium Businesses and Economic Reform

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The good health of small- and medium-sized enterprises

(SMEs) is essential to the economic prosperity of all the nations of the Middle East and North African that are partners of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). To create an expectation of fair adjudication of disputes and to enhance commercial codes with a view to enabling businesses to prosper and assure job growth, MEPI has engaged the U.S. Commercial Law Development Program to strengthen the capacity of judges in the Maghreb and elsewhere.

Saving Small- and Medium- Sized Enterprises:

CLDP's June 2005 workshop to bolster Algerian judges' ability to handle bankruptcies emphasized that SMEs can be reorganized rather than liquidated and thereby contribute to the economic growth and employment of the country. During the workshop, the judges also learned how to conduct the reorganizations. In addition, the country's different courts established shared standards and procedures for handling bankruptcies. In Tunisia, CLDP is working with a range of government agencies to highlight the advantages of providing incentives for effective enforcement of intellectual property rights (IPR) in order to support the country's technology-based SMEs.

Business Profits from Fair Procurement Procedures:

The Moroccan Ministry of Finance requested help in

crafting a user-friendly bid-protest mechanism and

improving coordination on procurement policy. CLDP responded with a Government Procurement workshop in March 2005 attended by private sector and government representatives. The group proposed a model based on international best practices for adoption by the government.

Maghreb Alive with Business

Innovations: More than 40 technology SMEs and venture capitalists from Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria attended a workshop on equity financing in Tunis in March 2005. Maghreb scientists and engineers are inventing a significant number of new products/technologies/processes with strong potential to aid the local economies. CLDP experts advised on how to assess commercial value and how to evolve a professional network of patent lawyers, technology brokers, and financiers who can help bring inventors to market. Trainers stressed the importance to local economies of IPR protections.

An immediate result was a step toward regional integration of efforts through the creation of a venture capitalist association that can seek to build the local capacities to handle these challenges. More broadly, CLDP is helping to modernize business environments throughout the Maghreb as their economic leaders seek to strengthen private sector sources for economic and job growth. Greater regional integration can increase global competitiveness of Maghrebi SMEs.

Commercial Law Development Program PARTNERSHIP FOR FINANCIAL EXCELLENCE

- in Algeria, build judicial capacity to settle commercial disputes
- in Tunisia, revise bankruptcy laws to help re-structure businesses in difficulty and enforce IPR
- in Morocco, write fair, user-friendly procurement rules

MEPI is a Presidential initiative that supports economic, political, and educational reform efforts and women's empowerment in the Middle East and expanded opportunity for all people of the region.

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