

Date: 6 – 7 November 2016
Place: Dubai, U.A.E.
Venue: To be confirmed

Seminar Program – Day I

08:00 – 08:30 Coffee & Registration

08:30 – 09:00 Opening & Welcome

09:00 – 10:30 Recent Trends in FDI and New Forms of Investment

Over the last few years, levels of New Forms of Investment (NFI) have increased at the expense of traditional forms of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). When will FDI levels regain growth again and, if so, which markets will be the new pioneers in attracting new FDI projects? Do companies still see FDI as the preferred market entry mode or are there other forms of global expansion? What FDI opportunities exist across the globe for Free Zones?

10:30 – 11:00 Coffee & Refreshments

11:00 – 12:00 Free Zone Strategies of the Future

“Traditional” Free Zone models such as Export Processing Zones and Free Trade Zones that emerged across the world in the 1960s and 1970s are increasingly challenged in the current global economic context. Their advantages, such as preferential market access, generous fiscal incentives and low-cost labor, are no longer sufficiently sustainable. Free Zones need to differentiate their business environment and services to remain competitive. Recently, a shift to a “new generation” model of Free Zones is noticeable. However, the magnitude and pace of implementing new, innovative sources of competitiveness varies from zone to zone. This session addresses how Free Zones have evolved over time and which motivations have driven this shift to new Free Zone strategies in different regions of the world.

12:00 – 12:30 Regional Trade Agreements, Customs Unions and Competitiveness of Free Zones

Regionalization through the proliferation of Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) and customs unions provides significant trade opportunities for many companies worldwide. However, RTAs and customs unions may also challenge the functioning of current Free Zone regimes. RTAs may deteriorate the competitiveness of (existing) Free Zones as it may limit access to the domestic customs area of free trade areas and limit the export potential of zone-based companies. RTAs have implemented various rules and regulations to oppose “trade triangulation” and “tariff jumping.” What options do Free Zone authorities have at hand to counterbalance the deterioration of Free Zone competitiveness? How have various RTAs regulated the access of Free Zone goods and products to their free trade areas?

12:30 – 13:30 Lunch**13:30 – 15:00 Managing your Free Zone Organization: Defining a Strategy**

The changing global economic context requires Free Zones to constantly improve their organization and services provision. What has worked in the past may no longer work today. The organizational strategy should be dynamic and respond to the new global economic context by anticipating on the different requirements and needs of global investors. A Free Zone strategy should balance flexibility for future developments with predictability and clarity for potential Free Zone investors. More than ever, it is critical to have a solid and comprehensive strategy underpinning your Free Zone organization.

15:00 – 15:30 Coffee & Refreshments**15:30 - 16:00 Questions & Answers – Closing of the Day**

Seminar Program – Day 2

08:30 – 10:00 Investor Attraction and Marketing of your Free Zone: From Board Room to Site Visit

The decision to invest in a particular Free Zone is based on a wide range of location determinants. How do companies make investment decisions and how can Free Zones influence the location decision-making process? How have Free Zones evolved over time to cater the changing needs of corporate investors? Which marketing and lead generation strategies do Free Zone professionals have at their disposal to reach out to potential investors? How can you set up a detailed lead generation and investor targeting program to attract more investors and which results can you expect?

10:00 – 10:30 Coffee & Refreshments

10:30 – 12:00 Innovation in Service Delivery by Free Zones: Moving Beyond Financial Incentives

Attracting a considerable volume of high quality investment to a Free Zone is a pre-requisite for a successful Free Zone. The financial incentives free zones offer are a very useful instrument in the successful attraction of companies that invest in free zones. However, as many free zones offer similar financial incentives, providing unique customer services (so called 'soft' incentives) is increasingly a decisive factor in the competition for foreign investment. Aftercare services are important in this respect but one may also think of encouraging the creation of linkages between zone-based firms and local and domestic companies located outside the Free Zone.