

THE WATCH LETTER

from the Islamic Center for the Development of Trade

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Encrypted news - \$ 9,63 Billion, The size of the gaming market in the Middle East • TotalEnergies in Pole Position in Suriname
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□ NEWS ANALYZED

Dubai THE NEW EL DORADO FOR AFRICAN INVESTORS

Charmed by the city's connectivity and tax benefits, African businesses established in Dubai now see the Emirati hub as a major attraction.

For some time, decision-making centers, long based in European capitals, have shifted to other world economies. In the Middle East, Dubai has recently become a significant economic hub. The great citadel has gradually established itself as a logistical

hub and a vital financial center, and now, as an attractive pole for senior executives of all nationalities. Companies like Samsung, LG, Ericsson, Thales, Mitsubishi, Airbus, Accor, Porsche, Goodyear, Nikon, Casio, Alibaba, and DHL have set up regional headquarters

there. In Africa, the emergence of a new, educated African elite has made Dubai the focal point of their business. According to the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, over 21,000 African companies are established in Dubai. The rise of Middle Eastern and African companies in Dubai has partly contributed to the emirate's fruitful diversification, reducing its dependence on oil revenues. Non-oil trade with Africa has increased by 700% in the last fifteen years, growing from 33 billion dollars in 2015 to 50 billion in 2019, according to the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It's noteworthy that this renewed interest in Africa has been further stimulated by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which brings together 1.3 billion people in a \$3.4 trillion economic block of 54 African countries.

A Flourishing Global Market for Growth

As a prosperous global market, Dubai not only attracts but also stimulates business growth. Its economy is among the most diversified in the world, with oil revenues accounting for less than 1% of its GDP. Retail, wholesale, transportation, storage, finance, insurance, manufacturing, and real estate all significantly contribute to Dubai's GDP. ■

□ NEWS ANALYZED

A GULF COUNTRY WANTS TO INVEST IN A TURKISH PORT

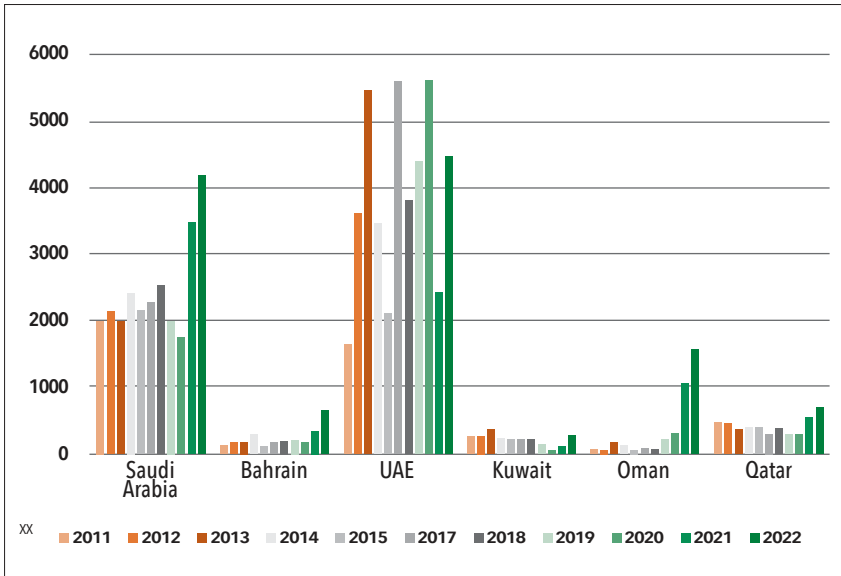
The prospect of a major investment by the United Arab Emirates in the critical port of Izmir in Turkey is currently fueling intense speculation. According to Reuters, the state-owned AD Ports Group is considering acquiring a stake in an entity created by the Turkey Wealth Fund.



Port of Izmir in Türkiye

countries. Specifically, under the terms of this potential agreement, the state-owned AD Ports Group would invest in an entity created by the Turkey Wealth Fund to manage the coastal port of Izmir, Reuters sources said.

It's worth recalling that despite some past geopolitical tensions, the two nations signed a free trade agreement in May of the previous year, paving the way for facilitated investments. In July, agreements worth over 50 billion dollars were concluded, demonstrating a joint desire to boost trade. The announcement of this potential acquisition comes at a crucial time as Turkey is undergoing a period of economic turbulence.



Despite recent adjustments to its monetary policy following the re-election of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey continues to face serious economic challenges. Years of low-interest rates have led to a surge in consumer prices and rents, while currency depreciation has added additional pressures on the national economy.

The recent diplomatic context reinforces the idea of a rapprochement between these two regional powers. The meeting between Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, president of the United Arab Emirates, during the COP28 UN Climate Summit in Dubai, suggests a mutual desire to strengthen ties, not only economically but also politically. ■

Will Ankara and Abu Dhabi bury the hatchet geopolitically? The United Arab Emirates is on the verge of acquiring a stake in a major Turkish maritime port, according to Reuters. This move is seen by many political scientists as a rapprochement between the two

□ NEWS ANALYZED

AFGHANISTAN LAUNCHES OVER 3,500 DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Afghan authorities have implemented 3,575 development projects across the country over the past year, a local television channel reported, citing the Ministry of Economy.



Road works in Kabul

«This year, we are planning more development initiatives. This plan includes the construction of roads, dams, and other infrastructure in several sectors, including agriculture. Compared to the previous year, more funds will be spent, and there will be transparency,» said Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Afghan interim government, in a press conference.



Qushtipa Canal



River at the foot of a mountain

These projects, worth \$1.9 billion, cover the health, agriculture, transport, and energy sectors. The construction of new dams and other hydraulic projects is also underway in the country. Moreover, it's important to note that the Ministry of Energy and Water had allocated 3.7 billion afghanis (\$43.5 million) to implement 411 water management projects. Afghanistan is a country rich in natural resources: coal, oil, natural gas, gold, copper, etc. It has fertile land and precious stones. The value of these resources



A park in Kabul, Afghanistan.



Military hospital in Kabul

is estimated by geologists and experts at about 1 trillion US dollars. However, their extraction requires

significant investment in machinery, transport, and logistics. ■



□ NEWS ANALYZED

TURKEY AND BRUNEI SIGN 5 COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

They cover the fields of archives, education, defense industries, culture, and diplomacy.



Signing of cooperation agreements between the Ministers of the two countries



Ministers of FA Dato Erywan Pehin Yusof and Nasser Bourrita

The governments of Turkey and Brunei Darussalam have signed 5 cooperation agreements in the areas of archives, education, defense industries, culture, and diplomacy. «We have reaffirmed our desire to develop our cooperation. We have exchanged views on investment fields that will diversify our economic and commercial relations,» declared President Erdogan during a joint press conference with the Sultan of Brunei, Hassanal Bolkiah.

He noted that current global issues were also addressed: «We discussed topics such as Palestine, the Rohingya, Islamophobia, and the Ukrainian war. We spoke about the importance of increasing our cooperation on regional and international platforms, especially within ASEAN and the OIC.»

Brunei and Morocco have also opened a window of cooperation this year.

The cooperation between Morocco and Brunei Darussalam concerns food security, tourism, investment, and academic exchanges. «Morocco and Brunei Darussalam have a strategic positioning in Africa and Southeast Asia and can capitalize on this advantage to strengthen the development of economic activities,» remarked the Moroccan foreign minister during a press briefing. ■

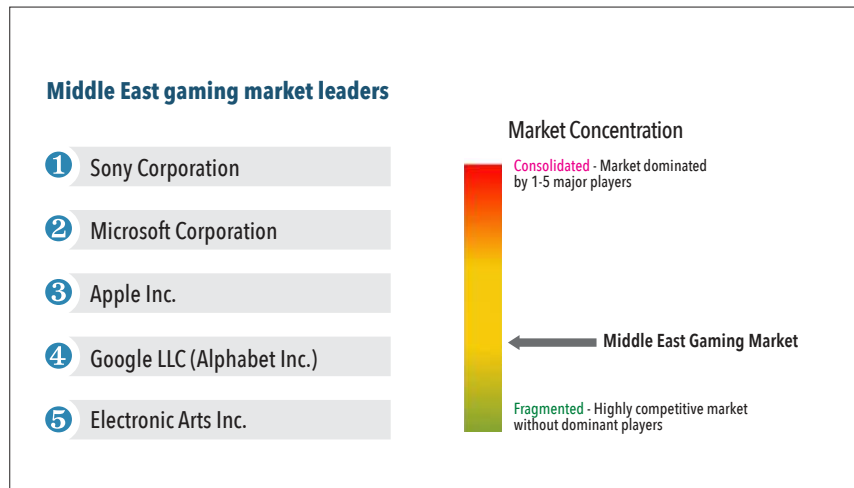
□ ENCRYPTED NEWS

\$ **9,63** BILLION

The size of the gaming market in the Middle East

The size of the gaming market in the Middle East is expected to grow from \$5.71 billion in 2023 to \$9.63 billion by 2028, at a CAGR of 11.01% during the forecast period (2023-2028).

Africa and the Middle East gained 54 million new gamers, as revealed by the «Global Games Market Report,» published in July 2022 by Newzoo. According to these figures, Africa and the Middle East have 488 million players, up from 434 million in the 2021 edition of the study. The two regions account for 15% of the global market share, worth about \$7.1 billion, of the video game industry. The Middle East gaming market is moderately fragmented and features numerous global and regional players. Key market players include Sony Cor-



African gamers competing



Electronic Sports League (ESL) organizes a computer and video games fair and an international gamers' meeting.



African gamers competing

poration, Microsoft Corporation, Apple Inc., Google LLC (Alphabet Inc.), and Electronic Arts Inc.

«The Middle East will be one of the main drivers of this growth in 2022 and the following years. Growth factors in these regions include better internet infrastructure (mobile), affordable access to connectivity, and the growth of the middle class,» the study explains.

Recall that in September 2022, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman, announced the National Gaming and Esports Strategy (NGES), a comprehensive 10-year investment plan aimed at developing the entire value chain of gaming and Esports. The plan emphasizes that by 2030, Saudi Arabia will host more than 250 gaming companies, creating countless career opportunities not

only for players in the region but also for those worldwide. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia aims for 30 locally developed games to be among the top 300 global games.

This allows not only for the development of talent and job creation but also for the development of games that tell the story of a region and a culture considered the cradle of civilization.■

TOTAL ENERGIES IN POLE POSITION IN SURINAME

The global company announced signing a production sharing contract for block 64 with Staatsolie Maatschappij Suriname (Staatsolie), the national company of Suriname, alongside its partners QatarEnergy and Petronas.

TotalEnergies has announced signing a production sharing contract for block 64 with Staatsolie Maatschappij Suriname (Staatsolie), the national company of Suriname, alongside its partners QatarEnergy and Petronas. Block 64 was awarded to TotalEnergies and its partners as part of the 2022-2023 tender organized by the authorities of Suriname.

TotalEnergies will operate this block with a 40% stake alongside QatarEnergy (30%) and Petronas (30%).

Block 64 is a vast field of 6,262 km² located some 250 kilometers off the coast.

In Suriname, TotalEnergies is also the operator of block 58 (50%) alongside APA Corporation (50%), where five discoveries have been made, and development studies are underway with the goal of launching the project by the end of 2024. In May 2023, TotalEnergies entered exploration blocks 6 and 8, as an operator (40%) alongside QatarEnergy (20%) and Paradise Oil Company (POC), a subsidiary of the national company Staatsolie (40%). ■

COP28 SAUDI ARABIA BACKS TRANSITION TO CLEAN ENERGY



As the world's leading oil producer, with over 15% of proven global reserves, the Saudi Kingdom remains highly dependent on hydrocarbons for its energy consumption and exports.

From the declared ambition to achieve the famous «zero carbon footprint» in the futuristic city of Neom, under construction in the Kingdom, the fight against climate change has become the new leitmotif of Saudi mega-projects. The Kingdom, which launched its modernization project in 2016 with the «Vision 2030» plan, now combines economic diversification, energy transition, and environmental concerns.

However, to the dismay of climate experts, Riyadh aspires to position itself as a global player in clean

energy. At the recent COP28 held in Dubai, the Kingdom pledged to achieve «net-zero emissions» by 2060, to put the state-owned oil giant Aramco on the path to carbon neutrality by 2050, to generate 50% of its electricity from renewable energy by 2030, and to plant 10 billion trees. Saudi Arabia now advocates for climate goals that focus not on «producing less» hydrocarbons but on «producing cleaner.» Environmental imperatives are being taken increasingly seriously at the highest levels of governance. ■

2022	% global production, in thousands of barrels/day
1 United States	18.9
2 Saudi Arabia	12.9
3 Russia	11.9
4 Canada	5.9
5 Iraq	4.8

□ NEWS ANALYZED

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Gulf countries have begun a transformation of their economies, creating investment opportunities.

The countries of the Near and Middle East have long profited from their natural oil resources to enrich themselves and experience exponential growth. However, following the collapse of oil prices, the region has implemented new strategies to stimulate other economic sectors (including the «Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030» in the United Arab Emirates and the «Qatar National Vision») and prepare for the post-oil era. Despite facing multiple environmental challenges, such as extreme temperatures and unstable soil composition, the countries in the region demonstrate great resilience and abound with opportunities in the construction sector.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

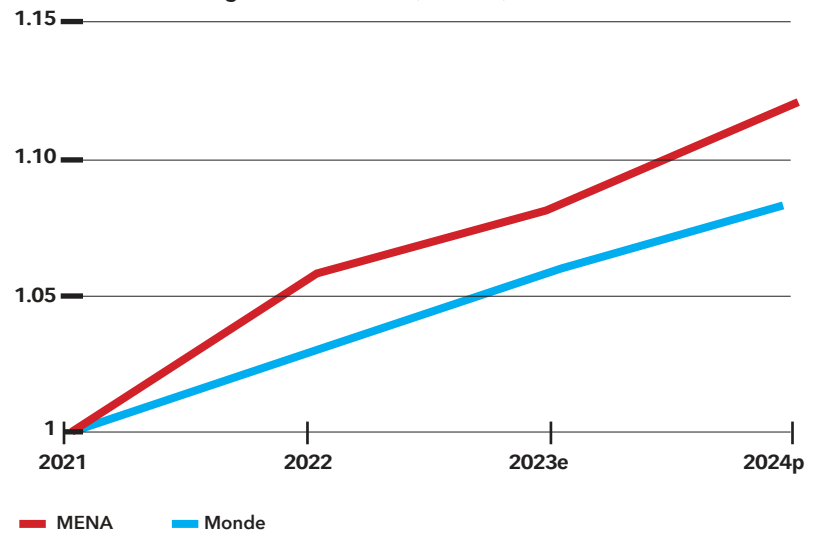
The construction sector in the United Arab Emirates is valued at over 25 billion dollars, with 306 billion dollars in upcoming projects, 80% of which are urban and infrastructure projects. This underlines the UAE's continuous rise as an indispensable economic and financial power in the region, justifying its second-place position in the construction market behind Saudi Arabia. The country hosts major real estate companies like Aldar and Emaar, the latter being responsible for the world's tallest skyscraper and largest shopping mall, Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall.

Additionally, significant builders such as Al Naboodah Contracting, the builder of the world's tallest tower «Dubai Creek Tower,» Besix, the builder of the French pavilion for the world expo, and Arabtec, the builder of the UAE pavilion for the world expo, are present. The diversification

Cumulative growth index - actual and forecast - of real GDP in the Middle East and North Africa region, 2021 - 2024

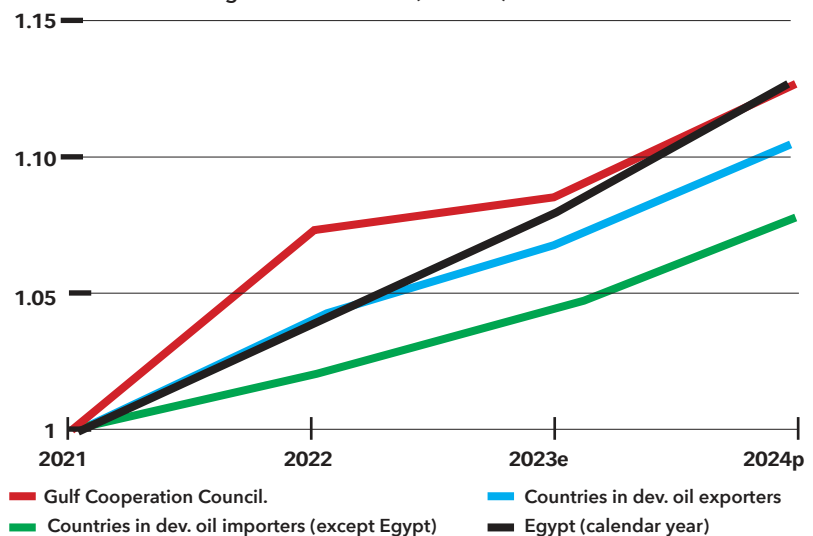
a - MENA region and rest of the world

Cumulative real GDP growth since 2021 (2021=1)



b - By regional subgroup

Cumulative real GDP growth since 2021 (2021=1)





Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab, UAE



Project for a residential skyscraper designed for the city of Riyadh, capital of Saudi Arabia



Al Rayyan, Qatar

demographic changes (population growing from 1.3 million to 3 million by 2030), and reduce its dependence on oil. This program is an example of massive investment in transport, infrastructure, residential and commercial buildings, and industrial projects. Recently, Aldar became the country's largest developer ahead of Emaar thanks to a 8.2 billion dollar agreement to build over 25,000 homes and infrastructure for Emirati citizens.

SAUDI ARABIA

The construction sector is the fourth largest in the Kingdom, with an estimated average annual growth rate between 2019 and 2024 of 7%. Currently, 5,200 projects are under construction with a total value of nearly 819 billion dollars. The country's major constructors are large Saudi family businesses capable of operating in all or part of the construction sector.

Key sectors include residential building, with 3.3 million housing units needed by 2025, the hotel, tourism, and entertainment sector, as the country faces a hotel supply shortage while planning to welcome 100 million tourists by 2030, and the energy efficiency sector, necessary for a country ranked as the third-largest energy consumer globally. To meet these challenges, several mega-projects of new cities are planned.

QATAR

The Qatari government wishes for «new and sustainable cities» to be a priority. Indeed, environmental preservation is a major concern for the country, which plans to invest in the energy efficiency of buildings and «Green and smart buildings» with sustainable materials. Another pillar of the QNV 2030 is territorial planning with the decentralization of the capital Doha, the construction of new urban centers, and new transport infrastructure (examples in Al Rayyan, Al Wakrah, Al Shamal, and Al Daayen). ■

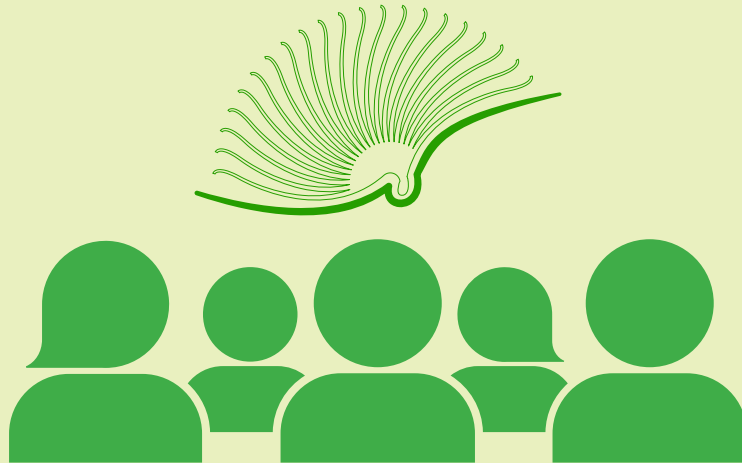
of the construction sector offers various opportunities: accelerated urbanization, creation of satellite cities, industrial zones, buildings, and «green» cities.

The comprehensive «Abu Dhabi 2030» plan aims to transform and diversify the emirate's economic model, respond to increasing



**TRAINING WORKSHOP
ON MARKET ACCESS AND VALUE CHAIN MANAGEMENT
FOR WOMEN-LED BUSINESSES AND COOPERATIVES
IN FRENCH-SPEAKING OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES**

FIRST SEMESTER 2024 • N'DJAMENA, CHAD



THE WORKSHOP ESSENTIALLY AIMS TO HELP SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMES) AND WOMEN-LED COOPERATIVES INCREASE THEIR ACCESS TO THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET AND BETTER MANAGE THEIR VALUE CHAINS, WHICH, IN TURN, WILL INCREASE OVERALL FLOWS OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS OF FRENCH-SPEAKING MEMBER COUNTRIES.

THE WORKSHOP AIMS TO SUPPORT BUSINESS AND COOPERATIVE LEADERS FROM OIC MEMBER COUNTRIES, WITH THE AIM OF ACCESSING THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET, DISCOVERING NEW MARKET TRENDS AND PROVIDING THEM WITH THE NECESSARY SUPPORT IN TERMS OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES.



□ IN SHORT

► **Egypt Secures 5.6 Billion Dollars**

The Egyptian government has raised 5.6 billion dollars through the divestment of stakes in 14 public companies on the stock market since March 2022, as reported by its head of government. In late December 2022, the Egyptian government had already adopted a «Strategic Document on Corporate Shareholding,» which plans for significant state disengagement from non-strategic sectors in favor of local and foreign private investors, aiming to increase the private sector's contribution to the economy to 65% by 2025, up from 30% in 2021.

► **Hydrocarbons: Nigeria Offers New Incentives**

Nigeria will offer new incentives to investors in the oil and natural gas sectors to increase hydrocarbon production, Bloomberg reported. «The new incentives include replacing signature bonuses [payments made by companies to governments upon signing contracts] with lump-sum payments for production,» revealed Gbenga Komolafe, the Director-General of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC).

► **Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso Explore New Monetary Alliance**

The three countries are working on establishing a new sub-regional organization named the Sahel States Alliance (AES). In this regard, they have signed a charter. The AES aims to lay the foundation for true integration within the new alliance, including improving the free movement of goods and people, establishing a food security mechanism, and developing a common industrialization strategy.

► **Côte d'Ivoire: FKS Foods Plans Cocoa Processing Plant by 2025**

Senegalese agribusiness FKS Foods, a subsidiary of the Turkish group MFB International, has begun constructing a cocoa processing plant in Côte d'Ivoire, estimated to cost 68 billion FCFA (114 million dollars). This was revealed by Souleymane Diarrassouba, the Ivorian Minister of Commerce, Industry, and SME Promotion, in December during a press briefing. Located near the Ébrié Lagoon, the new plant will have a processing capacity of 150,000 tons of cocoa beans per year. The construction work is scheduled to last 12 months.

► **Senegal: Gold Export Revenues on the Rise**

In total, industrial gold production reached 15 tons in 2022, compared to 16.2 tons in 2021. This is one of the findings of a report published on December 21 by the local committee of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which stated that export revenues reached 540 billion FCFA in 2022, marking a 7% annual increase. It's noteworthy that Senegal has two industrial gold mines. According to the EITI, the Sabodala-Massawa mine, operated by Endeavour Mining, was responsible for the national production decrease in 2022, delivering 11 tons of gold compared to 12.2 tons in 2021. As for the second mine, Mako by Resolute Mining, production remained stable at 4 tons of gold.

► **Togo: Public Debt Ratio Rises**

Togo's public debt ratio reached 66.4% of GDP at the end of September 2023, up from 65.5% at the end of December 2022, according to data provided by the National Credit Council. This level is «below the community ceiling norm of 70%,» as reminded by Simfeitchéou Pré, Minister Advisor to the President of the Republic. At 3,337 billion FCFA at the end of December 2022, the debt-to-GDP ratio was at 66%, up from 61% in mid-2022. This ratio was still at 51.95% in 2019 and 62.43% in 2021, and it stood at 60% at the end of March 2023.

► **Mauritania: Inauguration of an Ice Plant**

The Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) inaugurated an ice plant at the Tanit fishing port in western Mauritania on December 27, 2023. The project, valued at 24 million AED (6.5 million dollars), was executed by the Emirati company Talc Investment.

► **Africa: New Playground for Drone Exporters**

«Everywhere I go in Africa, everyone talks to me about drones!» declared Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan during his last tour of the continent at the end of 2021. Since then, the three countries he visited (Togo, Angola, and Nigeria) have joined the increasingly open club of states equipped with Turkish combat aircraft Aksungur and Bayraktar TB2. Like China and Israel, its two main competitors in the African combat drone market, Turkey is capitalizing on the growing appetite of the continent's military headquarters for UAVs.

► **African-Made Dolls**

Created by Afro-descendant female entrepreneurs in the 2010s and distributed through online sales, «African-made dolls» have become increasingly popular during this past Christmas season. Urbidolls has signed a partnership with Monoprix and Printemps Haussmann to be distributed in these stores during the Christmas period. The dolls are available in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Chad, and Congo-Brazzaville, thanks to an agreement with the Lebanese group Orca.

► **Morocco Boosts Social Support**

In Morocco, nearly a million families have begun receiving direct monthly assistance, an unprecedented system in the Kingdom that has been anticipated for years. Beneficiaries received 500 dirhams (just over 45 euros) per month, «regardless of family composition,» as specified by the Head of Government Aziz Akhannouch during a government council, cited in a statement.



The Islamic Centre for Trade Development (C.I.D.C), 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.

C.I.D.C'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.

calendar



- **WORKSHOP ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF E-COMMERCE IN AFRICA**
January 08-10, 2024 • Casablanca, Morocco
- **REGIONAL PREPARATORY WORKSHOP FOR THE 13th WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE (MC13) FOR THE BENEFIT OF OIC MEMBER STATES**
January 10-11, 2024 • Tunis, Tunisia
- **FOIRE DE BAGDAD**
January 10-19, 2024 • Baghdad, Iraq
- **7th SESSION OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF OIC INSTITUTIONS (ACMOI)**
January 17-18, 2024 • Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
- **22nd MEETING OF ECONOMIC ADVISORS TO EMBASSIES ACCREDITED OIC MEMBER STATES IN MOROCCO**
January 29, 2024 • Rabat, Morocco
- **OIC MEETING ON ACTION PLAN 2026-2035**
January 29-31, 2024 • Casablanca, Morocco
- **14th WORLD ISLAMIC ECONOMIC FORUM (WIEF)**
February 06-08, 2024 • Abu Dhabi, UAE
- **TRADE FACILITATION IN ARAB REGION (WORLD GOVERNMENT SUMMIT)**
February 12-14, 2024 • Dubai, United Arab Emirates
- **MUSLIM WORLD WOMEN SUMMIT - KUALA LUMPUR**
February 22-23, 2024 • Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- **WTO MC13**
February 26-29, 2024 • Abu Dhabi, UAE
- **4th CONSULTATIVE FORUM OF REGIONAL COOPERATION ORGANIZATIONS (RCOS) OPERATING IN THE OIC REGION**
March 06-07, 2024 • Marrakech, Morocco
- **OIC HALAL FORUM AZERBAIJAN**
April 24-26, 2024 • Baku- Azerbaijan
- **ICDT INVEST DAYS BANJUL**
May 02-03, 2024 • Banjul, Gambia
- **15th ISLAMIC SUMMIT**
May 04-05, 2024 • Banjul, Gambia
- **WORKSHOP ON TRADE REMEDIES FOR THE BENEFIT OF OIC MEMBER STATES**
May 13-14, 2024 • Marrakech, Morocco
- **5th OIC HEALTH EXPO**
July 04-07, 2024 • Dakar, Senegal
- **10th OIC HALAL EXPO**
October 08-12, 2024 • Tunis, Tunisia



Islamic Center for the Development of Trade

SUBSIDIARY ORGAN OF THE ORGANIZATION OF ISLAMIC COOPERATION

Tour des Habous 11/12 ème étage 20000 Casablanca-Maroc

+212 522 314 974

icdt@icdt-oic.org

www.icdt-cidc.org