



**Under the Umbrella of the Arab Africa Trade Bridges Program:
ITFC and Export Development Authority Launch First Training Program for Exporters
'Entering African Markets' in Cairo**

(Cairo, Egypt)

Marking a key milestone for Africa's continental trade system and export-led growth, under the umbrella of Arab Africa Trade Bridges (AATB) Program, the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), in cooperation with the Egyptian Export Development Authority, and under the patronage of Her Excellency Nevin Gamea, Minister of Trade and Industry, launched the first training program for exporters entitled "Entering African Markets" in Cairo.

The program takes place over five days with the participation of representatives of 50 Egyptian companies.

The conclusion of the training program, which is set to take place on June 10, will be in the presence of HE. Mrs. Nevin Gamea Minister of Trade and Industry, HE. Dr. Hala Al-Saeed, Minister of Planning and Economic Development and the Governor of Egypt at the Islamic Development Bank, HE. Eng. Hani Salem Sonbol, CEO ITFC, and H.E Mr. Mamdouh Salman, Executive Director of the Export Development Authority.

In his opening speech, Eng. Nasser Al-Thekair, General Manager of the Trade and Business Development at ITFC, noted that Egypt is a key partner and supporter of the Arab Africa Trade Bridges (AATB) Program, which was launched in 2019. Since the outbreak of the "COVID-19" pandemic, AATB had shaped a COVID-19 Action Plan to provide critical assistance to contain and mitigate the negative repercussions of the pandemic in cooperation with the Egyptian government.

To strengthen and enhance the export capacity of Egyptian exporters, Al-Thekair explained that the AATB Program included a series of workshops to catalyze investment into African markets, with the first workshop being held in Cairo on December of last year followed by a workshop in Damietta for the furniture sector in March of this year.

He added that the importance of the current training program lies in formulating a clear integrated export strategy to enter the African market, in addition to introducing marketing and promotion strategies to help Egyptian exporters connect with African consumers.

To facilitate trade in pharmaceuticals and medicine between African countries, he stressed on the need to harmonize standards and regulations for medicine and medical supplies, which will open the way for the development of Egyptian exports of pharmaceutical industries to African markets.



From his side, Mr. Mamdouh Salman explained that this training program is a result of the implementation of the joint activities program under the AATB Program, which is a regional trade promotion program launched by ITFC and is implemented by the Export Development Authority, since December of last year.

The program was initiated through a workshop that aimed to educate exporters about market opportunities in Africa, followed by another workshop in Damietta in March of this year, which aimed to enhance the potential of young entrepreneurs and prioritize productive capacities to tap the financing and e-trade opportunities.

Lack of information on key market opportunities as well as the legal rights of exporters in the market often creates barriers to their success, he added, which is why it is significant to support exporters to build long-term resilience into their business models and outline strategies to succeed in the world's next big growth market, Mr. Mamdouh Salman noted.

Major General Hafez Hassan, Assistant Minister of Industry and Trade and supervisor of the Foreign Trade Training Center, noted that the Ministry aims to build a bridge of communication between African countries and Egypt in order to support President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi's initiative to increase Egyptian exports to US\$100 billion, adding that this requires a major shift in perceptions towards the African market.

He added that Africa is a key promising market that is open to a range of diverse sectors, and that Egyptian exporters can benefit from the assistance provided by the International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation to boost Egyptian exports to Africa and replace imported goods with local goods that are already existing in the Egyptian market.

Sherif El-Gabaly, Head of the African Affairs Committee in the House of Representatives, said that holding this training is a positive step in taking practical and tangible actions to enter the African market, as while Africa was always talked about in terms of strategic relevance, there were no clear practical or strategic steps to support the implementation process.

He added that the African market is the only market that can help Egypt to achieve its national objectives by increasing its exports by more than 20% annually.

Al-Gabaly added that the African Affairs Committee has taken measures to develop cultural interlinkages between Africa and Egypt through conducting a number of tours for Egyptian exporters to African countries, stressing the need to pay attention to logistic centers and for on-ground direct communication with the African consumers to truly have impact in the market.



Spotlighting opportunities for trade in Africa, the training program aims to forge an integrated export strategy for the African market and map the opportunities across Africa's diverse countries and cities, focusing on promising industrial goods such as building materials, chemical industries, medical and pharmaceutical industries, engineering industries, printing and packaging and paper products, furniture, as well as food industries.

On top of that, the program also creates a collaborative structure and environment to help solve logistics, infrastructure and transportation issues while entering the African market, all of which are aimed at facilitating trade through trainings to embed skills and boost the capacity of enterprises.

About the International Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC)

The International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) is a member of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Group. It was established with the primary objective of advancing trade among OIC member countries, which would ultimately contribute to the overarching goal of improving socioeconomic conditions of the people across the world. Commencing operations in January 2008, ITFC has provided US\$55 billion of financing to OIC member countries, making it the leading provider of trade solutions for these member countries' needs. With a mission to become a catalyst for trade development for OIC member countries and beyond, the Corporation helps entities in member countries gain better access to trade finance and provides them with the necessary trade-related capacity building tools, which would enable them to successfully compete in the global market.

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