

THE 1st CAIRO FORUM

2024

16TH & 17TH OF OCTOBER
FAIRMONT NILE CITY HOTEL, SKY HALL
CAIRO, EGYPT

CONCEPT NOTE

There are a lot of challenges in the world today. They are not only serious but they are constantly evolving and escalating, from weaponizing geopolitical conflicts, to treadmill action in facing deteriorating climate conditions, to serious debt accumulations suffocating the South, to unfulfilled youth aspirations especially in Africa, not to mention disappointing progress in SDGs, all this is occurring in the context of technology advancing at the speed of light creating both challenges and opportunities at the same time... and a lot more.

Like most other countries in the South, Egypt is in the middle of this turmoil being African, Arab, member of BRICS, the MED region and before all a member of the Global South.

The turmoil calls for close follow up of challenges and opportunities emerging. The main objective of "Cairo Forum" is to join efforts of major international think tanks in such follow up, continue the dialogue and analysis of what's happening and how to deal with it at individual countries level, at the regional level as well as internationally.

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FINAL DRAFT AGENDA

DAY ONE: WEDNESDAY 16TH OF OCTOBER

8:15 AM - 9:00 AM

Registration

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM

Opening Session

Moderator:

Dr. Abla Abdel Latif, Executive Director and Director of Research, The Egyptian Center for Economic Studies (ECES)

Opening Statements:

- Mr. Omar Mohanna, ECES Chairman, & Chairman of: Chubb Insurance Egypt, Prometeon Tyre Egypt Co. (Pirelli), & Coca-Cola HBC Egypt
- Mr. Steffen Krueger, Country Director Egypt, Konrad Adenauer Foundation
- Mr. Symeon G. Tsomokos, Founder & President, the Delphi Economic Forum
- H.E. Lieutenant General Kamel El Wazir, Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Transport and Industry, Egypt (*Special Session on Day 2 from 9:00 - 9:30 AM*)

9:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Session One: The Greek experience: painful yet effective reform, any lessons for Egypt and other developing countries?

During the Greek debt crisis, Greece undertook a series of important structural and institutional reforms to stabilize its economy and restore fiscal health. These reforms included modernizing tax collection, overhauling pension systems, and enhancing public sector efficiency. In the labor market, Greece worked to improve competitiveness and foster growth. The progress of these reforms was closely monitored through rigorous internal mechanisms and robust international oversight. Domestically, the Greek government established regular reporting and auditing processes to ensure transparency and effectiveness. On the international front, the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary

Fund (IMF) provided valuable oversight, support, and technical assistance, helping Greece stay on track and make necessary adjustments.

Today, Greece's economy is demonstrating resilience and steady recovery. The country has managed to maintain economic stability by continuing to apply and adapt these reforms. Austerity measures, while challenging, were executed with a focus on protecting the most vulnerable to minimize hardships. Greece's ongoing success underscores the relevance of these reforms and the monitoring mechanisms established, which provide a valuable framework for maintaining economic health and transparency that should be taken into account to build a more prosperous economic future. Thus, this session aims to explore how can other countries potentially benefit from such vibrant experience.

Driving Questions:

1. What role did structural and institutional reforms play in Greece's economic recovery after the debt crisis?
2. How effective was the oversight from international bodies like the EU and IMF in guiding Greece's economic reforms and how did Greece develop its own internal monitoring mechanisms?
3. What insights from Greece's recovery can help other countries better balance economic reforms with social stability?
4. What key lessons from the Greek experience can help other countries potentially evade similar economic crises?

Moderator:

Dr. Abla Abdel Latif, Executive Director and Director of Research, ECES

Speakers:

- **Dr. Nikos Vettas**, General Director, Foundation for Economic and Industrial Research (IOBE), & Professor, Athens University of Economics and Business
- **Mr. Harry Theoharis**, Member of the Hellenic Parliament for New Democracy, & Former Deputy Minister of Finance for Taxation Matters, Hellenic Republic
- **H.E. Dr. Rania Al-Mashat**, Egyptian Minister for Planning, Economic Development and International Cooperation

11:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Coffee Break

12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

Session Two: Global tourism in crisis: Navigating conflict and economic uncertainty

The global tourism sector is navigating a fragile path, facing significant challenges amid global conflicts and economic uncertainty. The ongoing war in Palestine, and now Lebanon, as well as the conflict between Russia and Ukraine have raised concerns about regional stability, and caused disruptions in international aviation. Additionally, inflation and economic contraction in major tourism source countries have reduced demand in international travel; all casting uncertainty over the future of the industry. Egypt, a major tourism destination, is facing challenges like many others, but also holds promising opportunities, especially with the near-completion of the Grand Egyptian Museum, set to be the largest pharaonic museum in the world.

Moderator:

H.E. Mr. Hisham Zaazou, Former Egyptian Minister of Tourism

Speakers:

- Mr. Haitham Nassar, General Manager, Hilton Maadi
- Dr. Tarek Sayed Tawfik, Former Chairman, the Grand Egyptian Museum
- Mr. Elhamy ElZayat, Chairman and CEO, Emeco Travel
- Mr. Huw Tuckett, Tourism Expert, UK (*via Zoom*)
- Ms. Eva Muminovic, Tourism Expert, Germany (*via Zoom*)

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Lunch Reception

2:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Session Three: Geopolitical conflicts and their economic ramifications, where to? what is the way out?

In an era marked by increasingly complex global challenges, the urgency for a unified response to geopolitical tensions has never been more apparent. Ongoing conflicts—such as those in Palestine, Ukraine, Yemen, and the South China Sea—require a concerted effort from the international community. Balancing the need to address aggressive actions while minimizing the impact on civilian

populations is crucial. Additionally, the current instability of global energy markets and economic conditions underscores the need for coordinated efforts to manage these interconnected issues effectively.

Equally important is recognizing how geopolitical conflicts ripple through global stability and economic prosperity. The interconnected nature of today's world means that tensions in one region can profoundly affect economic conditions, trade dynamics, and social stability elsewhere. Addressing the broader implications, such as the effects on energy markets, supply chains, and international trade, is essential as well. Thus, this session aims to promote dialogue and collaboration for diplomatic and sustainable solutions to foster global political stability and economic prosperity.

Driving Questions:

1. How do ongoing conflicts impact the global economy, and what mechanisms can be developed to address and mitigate these economic repercussions?
2. What roles can major powers like the USA, EU, and China among others play in facilitating conflict resolution and promoting global stability?
3. What practical solutions can be implemented to resolve ongoing conflicts, and how can global leaders ensure these solutions are effective?
4. What innovative strategies can the international community implement to not only resolve current geopolitical tensions but also create a sustainable and resilient global economic and political landscape for future generations?

Moderator:

Eng. Tarek Tawfik, Vice Chairman, Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI), & ECES Vice Chairman

Speakers:

- Ms. Mirette Mabrouk, Senior Fellow & Director of Egypt and Horn of Africa Programme, The Middle East Institute (MEI)
- Prof. David Monyae, Director, Centre for Africa-China Studies (CACs), Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations, University of Johannesburg
- H.E. Mr. Amre Moussa, Former Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, & Former Secretary General, the Arab League
- H.E. Dr. Badr Abdelatty, Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates

3:30 PM - 4:00 PM

Coffee Break

4:00 PM - 5:30 PM

Session Four: Near-shoring, investment for export and untapped export opportunities

As global supply chains evolve, near-shoring has emerged as a pivotal strategy for major economies like the European Union, shifting focus from traditional manufacturing hubs like China to emerging markets in Africa and the Middle East. Countries such as Egypt are well-positioned to become re-export hubs, taking advantage of their geographical proximity and improving infrastructure to facilitate trade with European markets. This shift has prompted major changes in export routes, highlighting the potential of these nations to tap into new opportunities and bolster their economies through enhanced export capabilities.

As the landscape of global trade continues to transform, the ability of developing countries to effectively engage in near-shoring will be crucial for their integration into international and European markets. Investments for exports are critical for these nations aiming to penetrate the European market, especially in light of non-tariff barriers and the EU's agreements on green exports. By aligning production practices with European standards and addressing logistical challenges, these countries can effectively substitute Chinese exports and cater to rising demand in Europe. Thus, this session aims to explore how developing nations can leverage near-shoring among other strategies to enhance competitiveness in the global supply chain.

Driving Questions:

1. What key factors position Egypt as a successful re-export hub for European markets, and how can these factors strengthen its trade partnership with major economies globally?
2. How can developing countries effectively leverage their geographical advantages and align production areas with European standards to substitute for Chinese exports in European and international markets?
3. What strategies can developing countries implement to navigate non-tariff barriers and EU green export agreements, enhancing their integration into European supply chains?
4. How can developing countries attract investments aimed at export growth, and what specific opportunities does Egypt have to capitalize on in this context?

Moderator:

Mr. Alaa Hashim, ECES Treasurer, Founder and Executive Partner, Transcendium

Speakers:

- Mr. Mohamed Kassem, ECES Secretary General, Chairman of Expolink & CEO of World Trading Company
- Dr. Blanca Moreno-Dodson, Senior Advisor in International Economics, Former UN Director, World Bank Manager & Lead Economist
- Mr. Nikolaos Zaimis, Head of Trade, Science and Enterprise at the European Union Delegation to Egypt
- H.E. Eng. Hassan El Khatib, Egyptian Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade

5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

Session Five: The vicious circle of debt – The way out for the South

The vicious circle of debt can be particularly detrimental for countries like Egypt, where efforts to stimulate growth often rely on accumulating loans. As these nations seek to invest in economic projects and social programs, they turn to international lenders for financial support. However, the changing financial conditions, including fluctuating interest rates and external economic pressures, can exacerbate the situation. As debt mounts, countries may find themselves trapped, where the cost of servicing existing loans limits their ability to invest in growth initiatives or comply with climate objectives. This accumulation of debt not only stifles economic progress but can also affect the welfare of the people.

To break free from this cycle, collaboration among various stakeholders is essential. Traditional debtor organizations like the IMF and World Bank, along with emerging debtor countries such as China, must work together to develop sustainable solutions. The involvement of the indebted countries themselves is equally crucial. Addressing the debt issue requires a collective effort to acknowledge the unique challenges faced by nations like Egypt. This session aims to explore pragmatic, effective, and fair ways for indebted countries to regain financial sovereignty, enabling them to overcome debt constraints and build a more equitable future.

Driving Questions:

1. In what ways have the historical actions and policies of debtor countries influenced the debt cycles of indebted nations, and what insights can be gained to foster better outcomes moving forward?
2. What roles could the IMF, other international organizations, and debtor countries play in supporting sustainable economic policies for indebted countries to overcome the debt cycle?

3. What innovative solutions can countries like Egypt pursue to break the debt cycle and achieve sustainable economic development?
4. How can traditional international financial institutions and new debtor countries like China redesign their lending practices to better support countries in avoiding unsustainable debt in the future?

Moderator:

H.E. Dr. Ahmed Galal, Former Egyptian Minister of Finance

Speakers:

- Mr. Alex Segura-Ubierno, Senior Resident Representative Middle East and Central Asia Department, International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- Prof. Franco Bruni, President, the Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI)
- H.E. Dr. Mahmoud Mohieldin, UN Special Envoy on Financing Sustainable Development (*via Zoom*)
- H.E. Mr. Ahmed Kouchouck, Egyptian Minister of Finance

DAY TWO: THURSDAY 17TH OF OCTOBER

9:00 AM - 9:30 AM

Special Session

Keynote Speaker:

H.E. Lieutenant General Kamel El Wazir,

Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Transport and Industry, Egypt

9:30 AM - 11:00 AM

Session Six: The unfulfilled promise of SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), launched with great optimism in 2015, are currently facing a stark reality of being off track. The global community set ambitious targets for eradicating poverty, improving health, and achieving gender equality, among others. However, progress has been uneven, with many countries struggling to meet their commitments due to a combination of factors including economic setbacks, political instability, and insufficient funding. For instance, recent reports indicate that poverty rates have not only stalled but, in some regions, have even worsened, while climate change continues to escalate, threatening to derail efforts across multiple SDGs.

Addressing these setbacks underscores the need to critically reassess the feasibility of the original SDGs and realign our strategies accordingly. The ambitious targets set in 2015 now appear increasingly unrealistic within the initially set time-frame of 2030. As the 2030 deadline looms, it is evident that a more pragmatic and flexible approach is needed to achieve progress in this horizon. Thus, this session aims to explore methods of aligning emerging challenges with the SDGs.

Driving Questions:

1. How can we advance the SDG agenda in light of current global challenges, ensuring that efforts are effectively aligned with the realities faced by different countries?
2. What strategies can be implemented to resolve the imbalances in funding for the SDGs, particularly to ensure fair distribution that supports the most vulnerable regions?
3. What role does effective monitoring play in assessing progress towards the SDGs, and how can we enhance accountability and transparency in tracking these goals?
4. Are SDGs still relevant in today's context, and how can we adapt them to better address the evolving challenges faced by communities around the world?

Moderator:

Dr. Ahmed Kamaly, Associate Professor, the American University in Egypt (AUC), & Former Egyptian Deputy Minister for Planning and Economic Development

Speakers:

- Dr. Vikrom Mathur, Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation (ORF)
- Ms. Dina Sherif, Executive Director, Legatum Center, MIT (*via Zoom*)
- Mr. Stephane Guimbert, World Bank Country Director for Egypt, Yemen and Djibouti
- H.E Dr. Maya Morsy, Egyptian Minister of Social Solidarity

11:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Session Seven: Increasing and Derisking Climate Finance

Increasing and de-risking climate finance presents a complex challenge, particularly for developing nations facing significant economic uncertainties. While frameworks like the TCFD, Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures, aim to enhance transparency, they often fail to address the underlying economic risks that deter investment in climate initiatives. Investors are understandably cautious about committing resources without effective strategies to mitigate potential losses, making de-risking a central issue rather than a secondary consideration. This reality prompts a closer examination of how to create an environment where investment in climate solutions is perceived as less risky, thereby unlocking essential capital for sustainable development.

The roles of the EU, USA, along with other global powers are pivotal, extending beyond mere financial contributions to serving as catalysts for frameworks that facilitate greater investment flows. While discussions often focus on financial aid, the potential for developed nations to provide technical expertise and innovative solutions deserves attention. There's a critical opportunity to explore how countries in the Global North, given their historical responsibility, can engage with the Global South in ways that genuinely support climate finance while addressing economic vulnerabilities. This exploration is vital for understanding the intricate nature of climate finance and the creative approaches necessary to overcome existing barriers. Thus, this session aims to illuminate these dynamics and foster a deeper understanding of collaborative strategies for enhancing climate finance.

Driving Questions:

1. What are the key economic barriers that developing nations face in attracting climate investment, and how can these barriers be systematically addressed?

2. In what ways can developed countries effectively transfer innovative technologies and expertise to enhance climate finance initiatives in the Global South, especially given the historical responsibility of such nations to contributing to the current climate situation?
3. How can we design public-private partnerships that not only mitigate risks but also align the interests of investors and local communities in climate projects?
4. What mechanisms can be established to facilitate genuine collaboration between the Global North and South, ensuring that climate finance efforts address both immediate needs and long-term economic resilience?

Moderator:

Mr. Hussein Choucri, Chairman and Managing Director, HC Securities

Speakers:

- Mr. Ian Mitchell, Senior Policy Fellow and Co-director of the Europe Programme at the Center for Global Development (*via Zoom*)
- Dr. Ahmed El Beltagui, Climate, Energy and Transport Sector Manager Delegation of the European Union to Egypt
- Mr. Mark Ahern, Lead Economist, World Bank
- Prof. Jorge Chediek, Professor, National Foreign Service Institute, Foreign Ministry, Argentina, Professor, Catholic University, Argentina. & Former Director United Nations Office for South South Cooperation (UNOSSC), and Envoy of the Secretary General for South South Cooperation (*via Zoom*)
- Ms. Nathalie Delapalme, Executive Director, Mo Ibrahim Foundation (*via Zoom*)
- Mr. Ibrahima Cheikh Diong, Special Representative of the President of BADEA on ESGs, Former UN-Assistant Secretary General (ASG), & Director General, the African Risk Capacity (ARC) Group (*via Zoom*)
- H.E. Dr. Yasmine Fouad, Egyptian Minister of Environment

12:30 PM – 1:00 PM

Coffee Break

1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

Session Eight: The Youth Bulge in Africa

The youth bulge in Africa presents both remarkable opportunities and formidable challenges for the continent and the global community. This demographic shift can drive economic growth, innovation, and social change, offering countries the potential for a dynamic workforce that enhances productivity and creativity. However, if not effectively managed, it can lead to high unemployment rates, social unrest, and increased pressure on resources, as governments struggle to provide adequate education and job opportunities for an ever-growing youth population.

For the world, particularly developed countries, Africa's youth bulge represents a potential reservoir of talent and labor that could address skills shortages and support global markets. Nevertheless, challenges such as migration pressures and geopolitical instability may arise if young people do not find opportunities at home. The integration of technology and artificial intelligence holds promise for enhancing educational access and vocational training, thereby enabling youth to thrive in a competitive global landscape. Thus, this session aims to explore the implications of Africa's youth bulge and the pathways to harness its potential.

Driving Questions:

1. What opportunities and challenges does Africa's youth bulge present, and how can we strike a balance to benefit both the continent and the global community?
2. What innovative strategies can local governments adopt to provide meaningful job opportunities and educational resources for their young populations?
3. How can international organizations along with developed nations effectively partner with African countries to tackle the challenges of the youth bulge and support sustainable development?
4. How can we address the migration concerns among Africans, particularly the youth, who seek opportunities in Western countries, especially in Europe?
5. How can emerging technologies and artificial intelligence reshape education and employment for young people in Africa, and what challenges might arise in this process?

Moderator:

Dr. Sherif Kamel, Dean of the School of Business, the American University in Cairo (AUC)

Speakers:

- Ms. Pato Kelesitse, Founder, Sustain267 & Host, Sustain267 Podcast (*via Zoom*)

- Dr. Aziz Ajbilou, Professor, the Faculty of Governance, Economics and Social Sciences (FGSES), Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P)
- Mr. Alexander Tsado, Director, Alliance4ai (*via Zoom*)
- Dr. Mohamed Lamine El Dhaoui, Senior Consultant, Industrial Economist, SMEs and Value Chains Specialist, Former Director, United Nations for Industrial Development Organization.
- H.E. Dr. Nabila Makram, Former Egyptian Minister of State for Migration and Affairs of Egyptians Abroad, & Head of the Technical Secretariat of the Board of Trustees, the National Alliance for Civil Developmental Work

2:30—4:00 PM

Session Nine: Asia, Middle East, EU Connectivity- Egypt's positioning

The growing connectivity between Asia, the Middle East, and the European Union represents a transformative opportunity for Egypt, positioning it as a vital hub in global trade and logistics. This connectivity offers numerous benefits, including enhanced economic cooperation, increased foreign investment, and improved access to diverse markets. However, it also presents challenges, such as the need for significant infrastructure upgrades, regional political instability, and competition from other emerging trade routes.

Ongoing initiatives, such as China's Belt and Road Initiative and many others, highlight the potential for Egypt to leverage its strategic location, particularly through the Suez Canal and its economic zone, which could become a key corridor for trade between Asia and Europe. The Suez Canal not only facilitates maritime transit but also has the potential for the development of logistics and industrial zones that can attract international businesses. In this new paradigm of connectivity, Egypt stands to benefit significantly, but it must also navigate the complexities of regional dynamics and infrastructural demands. Thus, this session aims to explore Egypt's strategic positioning in this evolving landscape and how to harness Egypt's strategic location to achieve a more integrated global economy.

Driving Questions:

1. How can Egypt leverage its strategic position to actively participate in ongoing initiatives like the Belt and Road Initiative among others?
2. What strategies can Egypt pursue to enhance its position and aim for a new paradigm in international trade and logistics?
3. In what ways can the Suez Canal and associated new projects be developed to maintain its competitive edge against emerging trade routes?

4. In what ways can Egypt revolutionize its trade landscape to attract global investment, transforming the Suez Canal economic zone into an international business hub?

Moderator:

Dr. Abla Abdel Latif, Executive Director and Director of Research, ECES

Speakers:

- Ms. Abir Leheta, CEO, Egytrans
- Eng. M. Sherine El Naggar, Chairman, Naggar Shipping Company, & International Expert for Connectivity
- Prof. Harsh Pant, Vice President for Studies and Foreign Policy, Observer Research Foundation (ORF)
- H.E. Mr. Waleid Gamal Eldien, Chairman, The Suez Canal Economic Zone
- H.E. Admiral Ossama Rabiee, Chairman and Managing Director, Suez Canal Authority

4:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Lunch Reception

4:30 PM – 6:00 PM

Session Ten: Digitalization and Inclusive Growth

Digitalization has the potential of playing a transformative role in shaping inclusive growth, and India's experience offers rich insights for other developing nations. The country has leveraged technology to enhance access to essential services like education, healthcare, and financial resources, significantly empowering marginalized communities. Initiatives such as the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) have improved transparency and efficiency in welfare distribution, ensuring that aid reaches those in need. Additionally, the rise of mobile payment systems and online platforms has fostered entrepreneurship, allowing individuals and small businesses to thrive in a more connected economy.

As we look at the experiences of countries like Egypt, it appears that while there are major initiatives to enhance digitalization in the economy, the full potential of a highly digitalized economy is yet to be realized. The Indian model illustrates how technology can bridge gaps and create opportunities for a broader segment of the population. Thus, this discussion aims to open up avenues for exploring how other developing nations can draw from these lessons to cultivate their own inclusive growth strategies. By sharing insights and experiences, we can better understand

the complexities of digitalization and its impact on economic development across diverse contexts.

Driving Questions:

1. What lessons can developing nations learn from India's approach to digitalization and inclusive growth?
2. What institutional changes are necessary for effective digitalization?
3. How can we achieve a balance between national security and digitalization?
4. In what ways can technology support entrepreneurship in developing countries?
5. How might emerging technologies, such as AI and blockchain, transform economic opportunities for underserved communities and drive inclusive growth in the future?

Moderator:

H.E. Dr. Magued Osman, CEO and Managing Director, Bassera, Former Egyptian Minister of Communications and information Technology

Speakers:

- Dr. Caroline Khene, Digital and Technology Cluster Lead, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex *(TBC)*
- Dr. Hoda Alkhzaimi, Director, Centre of Cyber Security and Research Assistant Professor, New York University Abu Dhabi, UAE *(TBC)*
- Dr. Aaron Maniam, Fellow of Practice and Director, Digital Transformation Education, Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford *(TBC)*
- Ms. Lorraine Porciuncula, Co-Founder and Executive Director, The Datasphere Initiative
- Mr. Anirban Sarma, Deputy Director, ORF Kolkata and Senior Fellow, Centre for New Economic Diplomacy, Observer Research Foundation (ORF)
- H.E. Dr. Amr Talaat, Egyptian Minister of Communications and Information Technology

6:00 PM – 6:30 PM

Closing Session - Dr. Abla Abdel Latif, Executive Director and Director of Research, The Egyptian Center for Economic Studies (ECES)

6:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Gala Dinner