

WORLD FREE ZONES ORGANIZATION

10th WORLD CONGRESS

23-25 September 2024 Dubai, UAE

ZONES AND THE SHIFTING GLOBAL ECONOMIC STRUCTURES

UNLOCKING NEW INVESTMENT AVENUES

Logistics | Energy | Manufacturing | Access to Finance | Digital

OVERVIEW

As the world's attention has gradually shifted from the pressing concerns of the pandemic, disruptions in supply chains, and conflicts around the world, significant changes have been unfolding in the global economy. Nations, whether emerging or developing, find themselves contending with soaring inflation rates and tightening labour markets, all while dealing with increasingly cautious investors. In response to these challenges, central banks across various regions have been compelled to raise interest rates in an effort to curb headline inflation. This tightening of monetary supply is expected to alleviate inflationary pressures and trigger a comprehensive restructuring of economies on a global scale.

Co-promoting and balancing economies

The process of restructuring economies has diverse impacts at different stages of development. Achieving a delicate balance between economic growth and inflation remains a critical challenge for developed nations. Conversely, emerging economies face higher risks during restructuring due to limited policy flexibility in dealing with obstacles.

Simultaneously, as food and commodity prices continue to rise, restructured economies provide opportunities for resource-rich countries to focus on the growth and development of sectors with value-added commodity exports. These sectors include specialties like Agro and Energy, skills-driven fields such as Finance and Services, geographically advantageous sectors like Logistics and Tourism, and technology-oriented areas like Manufacturing, all of which promise enhanced returns.

Benefits to governments

Governments can leverage these additional revenues to bolster their fiscal capacity, redirect resources towards debt reduction, invest in both physical and digital infrastructure, and bolster their foreign reserves. Special Economic Zones (SEZs), widely recognized as instrumental in achieving these objectives, make it prudent for both developed and emerging economies to establish and nurture such zones.

Policy level interventions

Policy makers have a unique opportunity to create enticing policy frameworks that encourage investments in projects that will stimulate long-term growth. Federal governments, especially those considering the development of economic zones, should allocate their resources judiciously to shape sustainable employment opportunities for their workforce and bolster their participation in global supply chains. Investors in economic zones worldwide can leverage this moment to unlock private investment opportunities, strategically crafting diversified and valuable ventures.

As we reflect on the structural shifts in global fund flows, the rise in sovereign debt, and the evolution of trade networks, it becomes evident that these factors will play a pivotal role in shaping the future landscape of business operations. Now is an ideal time to engage with global partners and associates, coming together to deliberate and discuss key strategic initiatives aimed at enhancing business resilience and diversification.

OPENING REMARKS

Dr. Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi

Minister of State for Foreign Trade, UAE

Dr. Mohammed Al Zarooni

Chairman of World Free Zones Organization, UAE

Martin G. Pedersen

Chairman, IFZA, UAE

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Jim Hagemann Snabe

Chairman, Siemens and member of WEF Board of Trustees, Denmark

Wamkele Mene

Secretary General, AfCFTA, Ghana

Gerhard Schröder

Former Chancellor, Germany

PLENARY SESSIONS

1. FUTURE OF LOGISTICS

In an era of rapidly evolving global trade dynamics and supply chain disruptions, the Future of Logistics plenary session delves into the transformative innovations shaping the movement of goods across borders. From the integration of AI and blockchain technologies to the rise of sustainable logistics practices, this session explores strategies to optimize efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance resilience in logistics networks worldwide. Join industry leaders and experts as they navigate the complexities of modern supply chains and chart a course towards a more connected and resilient future.

Expert Speakers:

- John Defterios (Moderator), Former Emerging Markets Editor/Anchor, CNN, United Kingdom
- Radu Dinescu, President, IRU, Switzerland
- Sonsoles Garcia, Minister, Ministry of Production, Foreign Trade, Investments and Fisheries, Ecuador
- Dr. Holger Bingmann, Vice President, ICC, France
- More speakers to be announced

2. FUTURE OF ACCESS TO FINANCE

Access to finance remains a cornerstone of economic development, particularly in the context of emerging markets and Free Zones seeking to attract investment. This plenary session examines emerging trends in financial technology (FinTech), the role of development finance institutions, and strategies for improving access to capital for businesses operating within Free Zones. Delve into discussions on innovative financing mechanisms, regulatory frameworks, and public-private partnerships that can unlock new sources of investment and drive sustainable growth in the global economy.

Expert Speakers:

- Anjani Trivedi (MODERATOR), Global Business Correspondent, The Economist, United Kingdom
- Dr. Sidi Ould Tah, Director General, BADEA, KSA
- Santiago Rojas Arroyo, Regional Director, Development Bank of Latin America & the Caribbean (CAF) Colombia
- Prof. Chi Fulin, President, China Institute for Reform and Development, China
- İsmail Ersahin, Executive Director, CEO, WAIPA, Switzerland
- More speakers to be announced

3. FUTURE OF ENERGY

As the world transitions towards a more sustainable energy future, the Future of Energy plenary session explores the opportunities and challenges facing the energy sector within Free Zones and beyond. From renewable energy integration to the electrification of transportation, this session examines the role of innovation and policy in driving the transition towards cleaner, more resilient energy systems. Join industry leaders, policymakers, and experts as they discuss strategies for accelerating the adoption of renewable energy technologies and navigating the evolving energy landscape.

Expert Speakers:

- John Defterios (MODERATOR), Former Emerging Markets Editor/Anchor, CNN, United Kingdom
- Joseph McMonigle, Secretary General, International Energy Forum, KSA
- Darrel McGraw, Global Head of EUR, PwC, USA
- More speakers to be announced

4. FUTURE OF MANUFACTURING

The Future of Manufacturing plenary session examines the transformative trends reshaping the global manufacturing industry and its implications for Free Zones worldwide. From advanced robotics and additive manufacturing to the digitization of production processes, this session explores how technological advancements are revolutionizing traditional manufacturing models and driving greater efficiency and

flexibility. Join leading manufacturers, technology innovators, and policymakers as they explore strategies for fostering innovation, enhancing competitiveness, and driving sustainable growth in the manufacturing sector.

Expert Speakers:

- John Defterios (MODERATOR), Former Emerging Markets Editor/Anchor, CNN, United Kingdom
- Badr Al Olama, Director General, ADIO, UAE
- Manuel Tovar Rivera, Minister, Ministry of Foreign Trade, Costa Rica
- Gunther Beger, Managing Director, UNIDO, Austria
- More speakers to be announced

5. FUTURE OF DIGITAL

In an increasingly interconnected and digitized world, the Future of Digital plenary session explores the transformative impact of digital technologies on business operations within Free Zones and across industries. From artificial intelligence and machine learning to cybersecurity and data privacy, this session examines the opportunities and challenges presented by the digital revolution. Join thought leaders, technology experts, and policymakers as they discuss strategies for harnessing the power of digital innovation, fostering digital inclusion, and building resilient digital ecosystems for the future.

Expert Speakers:

- Courtney Fingar (Moderator), Founder & Principal Fingar Direct Investment, United Kingdom
- Dr. Jan Michael Mrosik, Former CEO, Knorr-Bremse, Siemens Digital Factory, Siemens Energy Management, Germany
- Dr Amira Khattab, Senior Partner, Deloitte, UAE
- Dr Akram Nour, Chief of Digital Transformation, ECSZA, KSA
- Richard Bolwijn, Director of investment research, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Switzerland
- More speakers to be announced

FOCUSED EVENTS

MINISTERIAL MEETING

The Future Role of AI and New Technologies in Global Trade 2.0.

We see a new global trade paradigm emerging with the transformation of global supply chains and digitalization of trade. Trade disruptions and trade wars, global conflicts and crises, and increasing protectionism and sanctions are creating new challenges for international trade and growth. In the meantime, rapid technology advancement and global sustainable development endeavors are generating new

opportunities for countries and industries.

How can we seize those emerging opportunities and address those challenges together through international cooperation? How can we maximize the potential benefits of AI and new technologies while minimizing their risks? How can we make trade and AI do better today and tomorrow for global sustainable development and inclusive growth?

How can we leverage the benefits presented by SEZs to stimulate international trade and investment and ward off the threats to the supply chain ecosystem?"

How can we create more secure and resilient supply chains through promoting and building more modern SEZs?"

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR

LEADERS OF THE FUTURE

The global economic, social, and political landscape is fraught with uncertainties that challenge normal business operations. Slowing economic growth, geopolitical instabilities, climate change, energy market uncertainties, continuing high inflation, sanctions, protectionism, resource nationalism, and regime change—all of these, with varying levels of intensity, continue to disrupt the world and increase risks for global industry and trade.

Free Zones (FZs) are not immune, nor can they be insulated from these evolving conditions. FZs must learn to adopt, adapt, and build resilience to weather the storm.

As a precursor to the World FZO's 10th Annual Conference, a Leadership Development Program (LDP) has been organized for September 23, 2024. The primary purpose of this LDP is to enrich the participating Future Leaders of this rapidly expanding industry by sharing in-depth knowledge and industry insights, effectively making them Future-Ready.

This year's LDP will focus on discussing the emerging challenges for the global economy in general and FZs in particular. It will also explore ways to leverage the vast potential of tacit knowledge to ensure business sustainability. Knowledge dissemination will cover not only the current and emerging scenarios but also highlight the impending risks that FZs and their stakeholders must manage.

The LDP aims to bring together domain experts to share their rich experiences and insights. Subject-matter experts will conduct panel discussions that will be interactive, allowing participating delegates to pose questions and make meaningful contributions.

Program Schedule:

- 08.30 – 9.00 **Registration**
- 09.00 – 9.10 **Opening Remarks and Welcome Speech**
Dr. Mohammed AlZarooni, Chairman, World FZO, UAE
Dr. Samir Hamrouni, CEO, World FZO, UAE
- 09.15 – 9.30 **Introduction, Objectives and Deliverables**
Dr. Mohan Guruswamy, Chief Knowledge Officer, World FZO, UAE
- 09.30 – 09.50 **FZs: Evolution, Current trends and Prospects**
Martin Ibarra, President Araujo Ibarra, Colombia
- 09.50 – 10.10 **Developing a strategic framework to attract new generations**
Jochen Knecht, CEO, IFZA, UAE
- 10.10 – 10.30 **Digital Transformation Effort of Cities of Different Sizes**
Corey Gray, President, SCC, Australia
- 10.30 – 11.00 Coffee Break – Networking
- 11.00 – 11.20 **Digital transformation of Zones**
Dr. Akram Noor, Chief Business & Digital Transformation, ECSZA, KSA
- 11.20 - 11.40 **Navigating Stakeholder Challenges in a Globalized World**
Dr. Adil Zarooni, CEO, Al Zarooni Emirates Investments, UAE
- 11.40 – 12.20 **Panel Discussion: Unlocking the Power of Tacit Knowledge**
Dr Mohan Guruswamy, Chief Knowledge Officer, World FZO (Moderator), UAE
Jochen Knecht, CEO, IFZA, UAE
Dr. Akram Noor, Chief Business & Digital Transformation, ECSZA, KSA
Dr. Adil Zarooni, CEO, Al Zarooni Emirates Investments, UAE
- 12.20 – 13.20 **Lunch**
- 13.20 – 13.40 **Designing a promotion strategy**

Scott Wang, Vice President – Asia Pacific, World Trade Centers Association (WTCA), USA

13.40 – 14.00 **Unlocking Global Opportunities**

Karim Refaat, Chairman, The N Gage Group, Egypt

14.00 – 14.20 **TBA**

Simon Sonoo, Senior Vice President, Economic Zones at DP World

14.20 – 14.50 **Coffee Break – Networking**

14.50 – 15.30 **Panel Discussion: FZs: Major Challenges and Way Forward**

To Be Announced (Moderator)

Srikanth Badiga, Group Director, Phoenix Group, India

Kelli-Dawn Hamilton, CEO–Interim, Jamaica Special Economic Zone Authority, Jamaica

Preston Mendenhall, Group COO, Rendeavour, RENDEAVOUR, Kenya

15.30 – 16.00 **World FZO Presentation**

16.00 – 16.30 **Closing Remarks**

Dr. Samir Hamrouni, CEO, World FZO, UAE

SIDE STREAM SESSIONS

1. S3 UNCTAD

Global Economic Fracturing & Shifting Investment Patterns

Foreign direct investment patterns and global value chains are changing fundamentally. The growth of FDI has lost pace with GDP and trade. There is less investment in manufacturing and more in services. And geographical links and investment relationships are becoming more unstable and affected by geopolitical issues, resulting in a fracturing trend in global FDI.

This session aims to explore the opportunities and challenges of the changing FDI landscape for the future generation of Special Economic Zones, considering the need for sustainability, inclusiveness, and resilience – contributing to the overall theme of the Meeting “Zones and the Shifting Global Economic Structures – Unlocking New Investment Venues”.

Expert Speakers:

Richard Bolwijn, Director, UNCTAD, Switzerland

2. S3 UNWTO

TOURISM FREE ZONES: A real alternative for boost the new developments

Expert Speakers:

Martin Ibarra, President Araujo Ibarra, Colombia

Natalia Bayona, Executive Director, UNWTO, Spain

3. S3 World Customs Organization

Customs involvement and control in FZs

Zones are designated areas with distinct economic regulations aimed at attracting investment, fostering industrialization, and boosting exports. These zones offer benefits (advantageous tariffs, lighter regulation on financing, ownership, labour and immigration, and taxes). The benefits that zones can provide to economies are at risk when zones are used for criminal purposes, illicit trade, IPR infringing goods, etc. The objective of this session is to emphasize the need for Customs involvement in the process of authorization and implementation of FZs, the need for appropriate Customs procedures and controls for the sustainable development of FZs, and to explore solutions to enable Customs, FZ Authorities, other relevant authorities, and the private sector to work together to address current and emerging challenges in FZs.

Expert Speakers:

Yuta Takanabe, Technical Attaché, Procedures and Facilitation Sub-Directorate, World Customs Organization

4. S3 WAIPA & UNIDO

Investment Promotion and Facilitation in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Region

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has long been recognized as a key driver of economic growth, prosperity, and competitiveness across countries. Particularly in the Global South, FDI has been viewed as a critical element in promoting sustainable development, given its potential to foster economic advancement. Despite this, FDI inflows have been unevenly distributed, with African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries still struggling to attract FDI. Hence, there is great potential to enhance investment facilitation and promotion efforts, spearheaded by national and sub-national investment promotion agencies (IPAs), thereby accelerating FDI in ACP countries.

To support ACP IPAs in this undertaking and contribute towards a better understanding of their characteristics, emerging strategies and technical assistance needs, the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA) and its partner, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), conducted a first-of-its-kind joint survey, covering 61 IPAs in total in the ACP region. The empirical insights of this survey were compiled in a comprehensive publication on investment promotion and facilitation in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) region that was launched during WAIPA's 27th World Investment Conference in New Delhi, India.

The purpose of the session is to present the survey results as well as the insights emanating from its analysis. More specifically, the audience will be given an overview of the state-of-play, challenges, and opportunities of investment promotion and facilitation in ACP countries. Further, a model explaining the realities and complexities faced by ACP IPAs in their work will be showcased and key recommendations and practical (digital) tools to enhance their effectiveness and align their efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be presented.

Expert Speakers:

Stefan Kratzsch, Head of Unit, UNIDO, Austria

Ismail Ersahin, Executive Director, CEO, WAIPA

5. S3 International Road Union (IRU)

Trade and Transit Facilitation: How the global TIR System Enhances Security and Reduces Transit Time, Costs & CO₂ Emissions

For over 7 decades, the global TIR system has been revolutionizing cross-borders trade across the globe.

This session delves into how TIR enables customs authorities to facilitate international trade while upholding strict security at borders. Experts will discuss how streamlined customs processes, express lanes, and digital connectivity not only help transport companies significantly reduce transit times and costs but also contribute to sustainability goals by lowering CO₂ emissions.

Expert Speakers:

Rami Karout, Senior Advisor, Middle East & North Africa, The International Road Transport Union IRU, Switzerland.

6. fDi Intelligence

Powering the AI revolution: SEZs become data centres hotspots

Demand for data storage and processing is going through the roof as the artificial intelligence revolution and digitisation take hold. Somewhat overlooked up until a few years ago, data centres have become one of the hottest play in today's real estate market. Their site selection is determined by a specific set of requirements: land; a lot of power, preferably green power; access to plenty of water for cooling purposes; the need to import, install and maintain very valuable equipment; top-notch connectivity. Free zones are primed to bring together all these factors and success cases already abound, with SEZs the world over able to attract major data centre operators and build a whole tech ecosystem around them. The session will feature

representatives of private data centre companies investing in SEZs, as well as SEZs operators to share both perspectives into the perks and perils of setting up data centre operations in free zones.

Expert Speakers:

Jacopo Dettoni, Editor, fDi Intelligence, United Kingdom

7. S3 fDi Intelligence

How SEZs are pushing the e-waste recycling frontier

Electronic waste is the flipside of digitisation. Every year, tons of phones, laptops and batteries end up in landfills, thus becoming a major environmental threat, as well as wasting plenty of valuable and recyclable metals and equipment. But the future of digitisation hinges on the recycling of e-waste as critical minerals are scarce and expensive. With demand for such services set to grow exponentially, SEZs have a chance to play a key role in boosting their offering for e-waste recycling companies, enhance their tech ecosystem and play a key role in the circular economy of tomorrow. The session will feature representatives of e-waste companies investing in SEZs, as well as other experts in this field.

Expert Speakers:

Jacopo Dettoni, editor, fDi Intelligence, United Kingdom

8. S3 NAFTAZ

Association resiliency in a world of uncertainty.

In the post-pandemic world there is a lot of talk about resiliency of supply chains, but who is talking about resiliency of SEZ associations? We will in this session. Education, networking and advocacy are long-standing core functions of associations. External forces continue to disrupt the world in which associations operate. Associations are challenged to not only provide core services for our members while equipping them to navigate change, but also be resilient enough to navigate change and grow at the same time – all with limited resources and capacity.

In this session, we'll focus on how challenging times can also be an opportunity for growth for resilient professional associations.

Expert Speakers:

Jeff Taffel, President, NAFTAZ, USA

9. MORE SESSIONS TO BE ANNOUNCED

Monday 23 September 2024

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

08.30 - 09.00	Registration
09.00 - 09.10	Opening and Welcome
09.15 - 09.30	Introduction, Objectives and Deliverables
09.30 - 09.50	FZs: Evolution, Current trends and Prospects
09.50 - 10.10	TBD
10.10 - 10.30	Digital Transformation Effort of Cities of Different Sizes
10.30 - 11.00	Coffee Break – Networking
11.00 - 11.20	Digital transformation of Zones
11.20 - 11.40	Engaging with Stakeholders
11.40 - 12.20	Panel Discussion: Unlocking the Power of Tacit Knowledge
12.20 - 13.20	LUNCH
13.20 - 13.40	Designing a promotion strategy
13.40 - 14.20	TBD
14.20 - 14.50	Coffee Break – Networking
14.50 - 15.30	Panel Discussion: FZs: Major Challenges and Way Forward
15.30 - 16.00	World FZO Presentation
16.00 - 16.30	Closing Remarks

WORLD CONGRESS PROGRAM

08.00 – 10.00	Task Force 1
10.30 – 12.30	Private Sector Meeting
10:30 – 12.30	Task Force 2
13.30 – 15.30	Ministerial Meeting
13.30 – 15.30	Task Force 3
18.00 – 20.00	Welcome Reception

Tuesday 24 September 2024

WORLD CONGRESS PROGRAM

- 08.45 – 09.00 Welcome Speech
- 09.00 – 10.15 Future of Logistics
- 10.15 – 10.45 Networking and Coffee Break
- 10.45 – 12.15 Official Opening
- 12.15 – 13.15 Lunch
- 13.15 – 13.30 Presentation
- 13.15 – 14.45 Future of Access to Finance
- 13.30 – 14.45 Ministerial Meeting
- 14.45 – 15.00 Networking and Coffee Break
- 15.00 – 15.50 Breakout one - UNCTAD
- 15.00 – 15.50 Breakout two - UNWTO
- 15.00 – 15.50 Breakout three - WCO
- 16.00 – 16.50 Breakout four - UNIDO / WAIPA
- 16.00 – 16.50 Breakout five - IRU
- 16.30 – 18.30 World FZO Board Meeting
- 17.00 – 17.50 Breakout Six - fDi Intelligence
- 17.00 – 17.50 Breakout Seven - NAFTAZ
- 20.00 – 22.30 Gala Dinner

Wednesday 25 September 2024

WORLD CONGRESS PROGRAM

- 08.00 – 08.15 Welcome Remarks
- 08.15 – 08.30 Presentation
- 08.30 – 09.45 Future of Energy
- 09.45 – 10.00 Networking and Coffee Break
- 10.00 – 10.50 Breakout eight - fDi Intelligence
- 10.00 – 10.50 Breakout nine - IFZA
- 11.00 – 11.15 Presentation
- 11.15 – 12.30 Future of Manufacturing
- 12.30 – 13.30 Lunch
- 13.30 – 13.45 Presentation
- 13.45 – 15.00 Future of Digital
- 15.00 – 15.30 Closing Remarks
- 15.30 – 17.30 World FZO General Assembly