



A Globally Connected Palestinian Economy

Courtesy of Commercial Trade Representative Program

Building a strong and independent economy and becoming an integral part of global markets have always been aspirations of the Palestinian people. And for the ambitious Palestinian businessmen and businesswomen who wish to engage with international markets, a new high-caliber team of representatives has been assigned to facilitate their potential integration into foreign economies. For some, this move was delayed and should have been initiated a couple of decades ago; nevertheless, this is an evident, concrete step in the advancement of Palestinian aspirations toward integration in the global economy.

As of today, Palestine has a high trade deficit that stands at around one-third of its GDP and results from a total value of US\$ 5.36 billion of imports versus only US\$ 0.93 billion of exports.* Whereas the duty of the Palestinian Authority to decrease this trade deficit and increase national exports is indisputable, there is also an urgent need to diversify export destinations – especially considering the fact that on average for the past 20 years, 85 percent of Palestinian exported goods went to Israel.

Recognizing the need and urgency to grow and diversify Palestine's export sector, a National Export Strategy was formulated in 2014 that highlights a road map and specifies potential export products, potential destination markets, and the necessary tools and enabling environment required to achieve this goal. In this road map, the positioning of trade representatives in key markets was given high priority.

Thus, the Commercial Trade Representative (CTR) program was developed through a partnership between the Palestinian Ministry of National Economy (MoNE) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

(MoFA), and with the support of the Palestine Market Development Program (PMDP), a program that is funded by the European Union and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) to carry the mandate to assist Palestinian companies in growing their markets and improving their competitiveness. CTR is a potential catalyzer that aims to assist local companies and organizations to establish trade and investment linkages with foreign businesses and international markets in order to increase Palestinian exports and attract foreign direct investment (FDI) into Palestine.

Today, qualified private-sector consultants (the CTRs) are available in priority markets. They are present in Palestinian embassies and missions in the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, the Russian Federation, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and will soon be working in the Netherlands and Kuwait. They are mandated to promote Palestinian products and services, assist in attracting investment into Palestine, and create business linkages with the Palestinian diaspora. The CTRs were chosen for their knowledge and experience in the respective markets, having lived and worked in these countries prior to joining the CTR program. The CTRs were adequately trained and placed in the Palestinian embassies and missions abroad, and they stand ready to facilitate business linkages between Palestinian companies and potential foreign business partners.

The CTRs are supported by the MoNE through the CTR Coordination Unit (CCU) that is located at the Palestinian Investment Promotion Agency (PIPA). The CCU is designed to be the access point between the Palestinian private sector and international markets. Equipped with all the needed resources, skilled personnel, access to information, and the support of private-sector organizations, the CCU

To promote trade and investment linkages, Palestine has established the Commercial Trade Representative program and appointed commercial trade representatives (CTRs) in six international markets.



Palestinian companies participating in the World Food Moscow 2017 Exhibition. Photo courtesy of Palestinian Market Development Programme.

has been channeling information about the Palestinian economy to the CTRs, facilitating the establishment of linkages with international companies and organizations, and organizing promotional events on international trade and investments that target the Palestinian private sector.

CTRs continuously follow up on market news to analyze updates and identify demands. They feed their information to entrepreneurs and facilitate linkage between potential buyers and sellers. In addition to fostering investment, CTRs support the introduction of new technology as the main tool to enhance business partnerships and attract new investment in various sectors.

The CTRs will contribute to Palestinian economic development by serving and assisting Palestinian private-sector companies who wish to enter new markets and/or expand their current market shares. They will provide up-to-date quality information about the respective markets, point out business opportunities in specific sectors, and assist in matching and facilitating business-to-business meetings between Palestinian enterprises and potential foreign counterparts. The CTRs will also work closely with PIPA in the promotion of investment opportunities in Palestine by providing the agency with updated information about potential investors and relevant international investment events.

The CTRs Coordination Unit can be reached via phone at +970 (2) 298 8791/2 and via e-mail at ccu@pipa.gov.ps. In the United States, contact Yara Asad at yasad@plodelegation.us; in the United Kingdom, contact Majdi Haj Khalil at majdi.khalil@palmissionuk.org; in Germany, Gabriele Pfaff at g.pfaff@palaestina.org; and in the Netherlands, Yousef Shaath at yshaath1@gmail.com. Representatives to Russia and Saudi Arabia will be announced soon.

As expressed by the ministers of national economy and foreign affairs during the launching event of the CTR program in May 2017, “there are high hopes that concrete achievements of the current CTRs will soon encourage the Palestinian Authority to increase the number of CTRs in additional markets, and the Palestinian embassies will host new CTRs to work with the Palestinian private sector in order to expand and grow exports and generate new employment opportunities for Palestine’s young labor force.”

Any businessperson or investor who is keen to receive information about Palestinian exportable products and services, or who wants to learn more about opportunities of doing business with Palestine, should remember that the current CTRs stand ready to assist in any way possible. The CCU at PIPA is your starting point, so take the opportunity to contact us to expand your possibilities.

To open new market opportunities for business growth, CTRs attend business and cultural networking events; they liaise and foster relationships with trade associations, chambers of commerce, and Palestinian diaspora organizations.

* Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Palestine in Figures 2016*, available at <http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2261.pdf>.



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