

FCO/Cabinet Office/SBJBC Workshop, London, 21 February 2020: Summary

1. The workshop with FCO/Cabinet Office on 21 February discussed how government and business could work more closely together to better access to Vision 2030 opportunities. It followed SBJBC's roundtable with FCO and the Saudi Ambassador on 12 November, and was kindly hosted by Deloitte.

2. Over 50 private sector representatives including many SBJBC members participated along with some 40 UK government officials from FCO, Cabinet Office, MOD, Home Office, DIT and NHS Digital Health.

Opening Speeches

3. Baroness Symons welcomed the opportunity for a new partnership based approach with government, while noting that this had not always been the case. She made the following points:

- **SBJBC had a unique network to help build bridges and access opportunities.** We were small but nimble and punched above our weight. But we had a fraction of the resources available to the China or India Business Councils;
- **SBJBC initiatives in key reform sectors had led to real results** eg in knowledge sharing and subsequent contracts in PPP/Privatisation, SME Development, Infrastructure Planning, Renewables and Smart Cities;
- **Modest co-funding from government had helped to boost our delivery capacity** and shown how government can work effectively with business in key sectors. We should now build on this new momentum.

4. Sir Gerry Grimstone said that the timing was right post-Brexit for a more joined-up approach between government and private sector. The initial excitement following MBS's visit in 2018 had been quickly dissipated and we had become internally focussed. He made the following points:

- **There had been an inability to maintain consistent UK engagement with key markets** such as China, India and Saudi. Geopolitical commitment had not always been translated into a consistent trade policy, and mixed messages had given an impression of UK aloofness;
- **The UK remained a strong long-term partner and a safe haven.** We should take advantage of this to build a new whole of team approach and capitalise on the new context.

Panel Sessions

5. Panel and breakout sessions addressed the following:

- Could best practice from mature G2G2B programmes such as MODSAP be applied in other sectors such as education and healthcare?
- What lessons have we learned that could benefit future engagements?

- Our understanding of the Saudi government's need and ambition
- How to build a "Team GB" approach and create a better G2G2B model?

Conclusions

6. There was wide agreement on the following:

- **The UK is seen as a strategic and reliable partner** by Saudi Arabia, and UK expertise was much in demand to assist Vision 2030 implementation;
- **Saudi Arabia was rightly a priority for a stronger G2G2B approach** given the opportunities under Vision 2030;
- **Good examples of G2G engagement** (eg Government Digital Office/IGS in the Cabinet Office) lacked effective coordination with UK industry;
- **B2B engagement could also lead to requests for G2G inputs** (eg the Saudi request to help their National Project Management Office);
- **Government catalyst funding of pilot programmes** (eg AI/Fintech in the UAE and PPP in Saudi) could help to position UK plc for follow-up;
- **A single front door for capacity building requests** and a flexible response (as with the Know How Fund in Eastern Europe) was needed;
- **MoUs could help but only if used as delivery mechanisms**, and with specific targets;
- **Better communication between UK government and industry** on a sector basis would help. SBJBC had an important role to play in this.

Follow-up

7. It was agreed that a new sector should be selected for an **ambitious pilot** project to test a closer G2G2B strategy. FCO had planned to discuss this with the Saudis in Riyadh on 12 March but the visit was postponed due to COVID-19.

8. SBJBC has proposed that a high level **government/business steering group** be formed with FCO/Cabinet Office to follow up the workshop and monitor implementation, and we await further news on this.

SBJBC UK
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