SBJBC Biannual Meeting, 11 May at Clyde & Co, London: Summary Record

Introduction

1. Ben Knowles (Clyde & Co) welcomed participants and thanked members for their attendance.
2. Baroness Symons (Co-Chair) summarised recent SBJBC activity on Infrastructure and PPP, SME access to supply chains, and promotion of skills and employment. She spoke of a 'turning point' that both countries are experiencing, and how this will offer opportunities to work together. She hoped that PM Theresa May's recent visit to the Kingdom would be followed soon by a visit to the UK by the Deputy Crown Prince.
3. Chris Innes-Hopkins mentioned the useful SBJBC visit to Sheffield on 10 May, and the opportunities for collaboration in advanced manufacturing.
4. Sheikh Nasser AlMutawa (Co-Chair) agreed these were exciting times and spoke of the plentiful opportunities available for the UK and Saudi to work together on regarding Saudi Vision 2030 implementation.

Presentations and discussion on opportunity sectors within Saudi Vision 2030

5. Paul Green (Oxford Strategic Consulting) made a presentation on building human capital capabilities for Saudi Vision 2030. He highlighted the move from public to private sector, the rapidly increasing youth population, and the cultural shift required to build professional standards and upgrade skills.
6. Frank Edwards (Pearson) highlighted SBJBC's role in building relationships based on trust. Saudi risked slipping in global competitiveness terms and there was a need to focus on NTP implementation particularly in education.
7. Dr Ihsan Bu-Hulaiga (Joatha Consulting) commented on the move from procurement to partnership, and the role of investment in promoting local content and job creation. Saudi Vision 2030 involved a paradigm shift for the private sector, as well as for the public sector.
8. Baroness Symons mentioned the Aramco presentations at the SME Forum on promoting local content through the 'In Kingdom Total Value Add' programme.
9. Jan Ward (Corrotherm International) emphasised the importance of SME access to supply chains and mechanisms to achieve this.

Infrastructure and PPP

10. John Davie (Altra Capital) introduced Patricia Leahy who presented SBJBC's PPP Lessons Learned paper, and future prospects for the use of PPPs in Saudi Arabia. There were $6.5 billion of PPP infrastructure projects planned in the GCC and there would be competition for the necessary skills and finance. PPP procurement was very different from traditional government procurement.
11. Baroness Symons thanked Patricia for her input and mentioned SBJBC's participation in the recent UK-GCC PPP Conference at Lancaster House.
12. Ibrahim Alajaji (Alsabhan & Alajaji Law Firm) outlined KSA infrastructure prospects and the role of the National Privatisation Centre. UK project management and legal experience would be very useful, and we should present the paper in Riyadh in September.

13. Chris Innes-Hopkins acknowledged UK government support for preparing the paper and hoped a Ministerial introduction would be possible once a new government is in place.
14. Dr Al-Aljizizi suggested adding milestones to the paper to measure impact on job creation and VFM, as well as potential 'safety valves' in case of bad decisions being made.
15. Sir Charles Masefield referred to the progress BAE Systems was making on Saudisation and the quality of jobs in project management and engineering.
16. John Davie agreed that 'value for money' should not just cover cost but include 'Saudisation' and emphasis on quality over quantity, where job creation is concerned.
17. Anna Yerokhina (Pearson) said it was important to build on recent successes. Informal dialogue and open discussion were important in overcoming KSA implementation challenges.
18. Sir Sherard Cowper Coles (HSBC) said that the active role of women in the workforce was crucial. Baroness Symons echoed this point and told of her experience of meeting Saudi businesswomen in Al Khobar in April.

Report back on SBJBC SME Partnership Forum

19. Chris Innes Hopkins summarised SBJBC's SME Forum in Al Khobar on 4 April which coincided with PM Theresa May's visit to the Kingdom and resulted in excellent coverage. There were good opportunities to engage with the SME Authority and Saudi Aramco on a follow-up matchmaking event in London. We might also consider forming a Technology Investment Advisory Board
20. Hashim Alawadi added that companies setting up in KSA needed to take account of Saudi Aramco's scoring system to facilitate local content.
21. Sheikh Nasser suggested adding specific KPIs to track progress, including numbers of joint ventures formed and companies introduced. He asked Chris and Abdul-Karim Yaquob to work on these.
22. Abdul-Karim Yaquob suggested an internal SBJBC workshop in July to consider future strategy and think outside the box.
23. Dominic Milne (University of Aberdeen) highlighted the importance of skills and curriculum development, and SME participation in petroleum engineering programmes.
24. Dr Ihsan Bu-Hulaiga agreed that the SME Forum had been worthwhile. We now needed to move from a generic focus to a more specific London event which might focus on renewable energy cooperation.

UK GCC post-Brexit trade cooperation, including possible FTA

25. Sir Sherard Cowper Coles expected a difficult but fair Brexit negotiation with a transitional period of up to 10 years pending negotiation of a full FTA covering some 34 sectors. Trade cooperation between the UK and the GCC countries was high on the agenda. He was optimistic agreement was possible.
26. Vic Annells (Department for International Trade) said DIT would welcome SBJBC input into current barriers in trade and financial services, as well as future opportunities.

Any other business

27. Najat Benchiba-Savenius (Gazelle Advisory Group) outlined an event she was organising on 1st July for MENA young entrepreneurs

28. Chris Innes Hopkins mentioned the Oxford UK-GCC Business Conference on 20 June which he would be speaking at.
29. Hatem AbouOllo (Saber International Group) asked about the possibility of his organisation Global Entrepreneurs meeting with similar entrepreneurship associations in the UK.
30. Abdulaziz Alajlan (Mohamed Al Ajlan Sons Co) stated that the change in UK tax and domicile laws meant that less Saudis would want to invest in UK residential property. He requested a briefing session on this in July, as well as consideration of an SBJBC approach to the relevant authorities.

Closing remarks

31. Baroness Symons thanked Clyde & Co for hosting and members for attending. Things should be clearer once a new UK government is in place by 19 June. We looked forward to further informal meetings with Saudi SBJBC colleagues in London in the week beginning 17 July.
32. Sheikh Nasser proposed that the next Biannual Meeting take place possibly in Jeddah in late November or early December 2017. This was welcomed.

SBJBC UK
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