

**Academy of International Business  
AIB-MENA Chapter 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference  
Call for Papers  
The University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan  
Date: 12-14 March 2019**

***“Sustaining the Sustainable Agenda”  
Exploring Critical Multilayered Sustainable International Business Practices in the MENA Region***

The Academy of International Business MENA International Conference 2019 intends to bring forward insights about the role that Multinational enterprises (MNEs) can play in sustainable international business practices in a MENA context.

Sustainable development is considered to be indispensable for the overall development of societies in the current global scenario. The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has aptly stated that “...we all aspire to reach better living conditions. Yet, this will not be possible by following the current growth model . . . We need a practical twenty-first century development model that connects the dots between the key issues of our time: poverty reduction; job generation; inequality; climate change; environmental stress; water, energy and food security.”

The international business (IB) literature has made significant contributions in uncovering various sustainable activities by MNEs. The impact of MNEs on host countries has been shown to be of immense importance, as their investment embodies superior technology and knowledge resources and assets, management practices as well as corporate social responsibility (CSR) investments. However, it is the combined responsibility and efforts of host governments, civil society, NGOs and the capabilities of MNEs that will allow a longer lasting positive impact in the societies in which MNEs operate.

The IB literature has shown evidence for how MNEs can bridge institutional weaknesses and voids in host countries by, for example, providing infrastructure, education or healthcare services that allows the firm to make profits, be law-abiding, ethical, but also directly and indirectly providing wider benefits to others in the host region. Another strand of the IB literature has shed light on the ways in which CSR can be part of an MNE's overall strategy in reducing its inherent 'liability of foreignness' challenge. Apart from increased attention on institutions, there have been several links between CSR, sustainable development and other IB debates such as sector-specific industry dynamics and competition, absorptive capacity of resource capabilities, global value chains and production networks,

CSR and sustainable development in different contexts provide compelling areas in which existing international business theories, such as the shareholder versus stakeholder theory, the principle agent problem as well as the resource-based view can be tested. In this regard, studies on the MENA region have been very limited until recently. This comes on the back of government policy initiatives which encompasses environmental, economic, cultural and social standards.

The following are examples from the MENA region, at the policy and firm level. Examples such as these need to be deciphered, unbundled and apprehended when it comes to the role of sustainable international business practices in a MENA context, and the AIB-MENA Chapter 6th Annual Conference will make an attempt to do this.

At the policy level, the MENA region has been following developed countries and are being proactive in terms of setting sustainability standards in commercial construction. Thus, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), from the US, and the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) standard (a UK equivalent) form a basic international reference point for development in the MENA region. At the same time, governments in the MENA region have also proactively developed their own standards to reflect local conditions, needs and challenges. For example, Abu Dhabi has developed Pearl Building Rating System (PBRs), and Qatar has QSAS as sustainability standards for their respective countries and parts of these have already been made mandatory in these countries. In Abu Dhabi, the aim of the PBRs is to promote the development of sustainable buildings and improve quality of life. The objectives for these standards are to achieve sustainable buildings through the integration of the four pillars of 'Estidama' together with a collaborative and inter-disciplinary approach to building development known as the Integrated Development Process (IDP). Its aim is to create more sustainable communities, cities and global enterprises and to balance the four pillars of sustainability (Estidama): Environmental, Economic, Cultural and Social. Estidama is the first programme of its kind that is tailored to the Middle East region. Estidama, the Arabic word for sustainability, is the sustainability initiative of the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council (UPC). Abu Dhabi's Plan 2030 establishes a clear vision for sustainability as the foundation of any new development occurring in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

From a firm-level perspective, HSBC polled in 2017 more than 1,400 decision-makers of mid-market enterprises (MMEs)- defined as companies with between 200 and 2,000 employees, across 14 countries, including the UAE, with a focus on sustainable business practices. Results from this study show that MME companies in India (68 per cent), Saudi Arabia (66 per cent) and Canada (66 per cent) are the most likely to recognise sustainable business practices as a commercial benefit. Almost a third (30 per cent) of companies also believe that becoming a more sustainable business will contribute to improving their financial performance over the next three years. From a MENA perspective (as an example), 44 per cent of MMEs in the UAE, saw a direct connection between sustainable business practices and commercial success. Encouragingly, the top two sustainability measures MMEs in the UAE plan to implement in the next three years are transparently communicating contribution toward ethical goals to senior management (62 per cent), and setting targets and making progress towards employment diversity goals (61 per cent). Further, almost a quarter (23 per cent) will prioritise investment to become more sustainable over the next three years.

### **Call for Papers**

It is under the above UN call and globally acceptable "sustainability" agenda that we aim to call for papers under different tracks and disciplines under the international business (IB) unifying theme. In doing so we aim to investigate and call for discussions through developed papers topics that relate to the theme of "Sustaining the Sustainable Agenda". In summary our call encourages papers that explore critical multilayered international business practices in the MENA region. <https://aib.uowdubai.ac.ae/conference/aib-mena-2019-conference/first-call/>

The 6th annual conference of AIB-MENA will be held in Jordan on the **12th, 13th & 14th March 2019**. Theoretical and empirical papers using quantitative, qualitative, and or mixed-methods approaches could address a wide range of issues, including but not limited to topics below:

1. FDI, mode of entry choice, and internationalisation in MENA
2. HRM in the MENA region
3. Corporate social responsibility in MENA
4. International Marketing and creating global brands in MENA
5. Regional policies, NGOs, and governance in MENA
6. Government Policy and national competitiveness in MENA
7. International relations between MENA countries
8. MENA-Africa relations: past, and present trends
9. Building Cities of the Future: Sustainability, security, and migration in MENA
10. International/Islamic Finance and Banking
11. Cross/intra cultural management in a MENA context
12. Expatriate and international mobility, and careers in MENA
13. Knowledge management in the MENA region
14. International entrepreneurship and family business in the MENA region
15. Employment, employability, and entrepreneurship in the MENA region
16. Creating and enabling ecosystems for Born Global/Health/Education in the MENA region
17. Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainability in MENA
18. Research methods in international business in the MENA context
19. Social media in MENA
20. Enhancing learning ecosystem in MENA
21. The changing landscape of energy sector in the MENA region
22. Indigenous management practices in MENA

Details regarding AIB-MENA flagship case study workshop and industry panel, as well as, student research consortium, paper/professional development workshops, keynote speakers, publishing opportunities, social and excursions programs will be announced shortly.

#### **Submission Guidelines:**

The link to the AIB MENA submission system is <https://meetings.aib.msu.edu/mena/2019/>. Please make sure that your submission meets the JIBS submission style guide format. All submissions will be subject to a double blind peer review process. Please direct questions to: Dr Vijay Pereira, Vice President (Academic Program Coordination & Proceedings), Academy of International Business – Middle East North Africa Chapter: [VijayPereira@uowdubai.ac.ae](mailto:VijayPereira@uowdubai.ac.ae) and cc [racquel.warner@mbrsg.ac.ae](mailto:racquel.warner@mbrsg.ac.ae)

#### **KEY DATES:**

**Online Submissions Start: September 3, 2018** <https://meetings.aib.msu.edu/mena/2019/>

**Full paper submission: November 15, 2018**

**Full paper acceptance: December 15, 2018**

**Dr Vijay Pereira: Vice President- Academic Program Coordination & Proceedings**