



The first meeting in Ireland of two top Arab/European business organisations was held in Dublin yesterday, at which details of the new Arab/Irish Chamber of Commerce were discussed. Seen at the meeting were: (left to right) Mr. Rakan Younis, Secretary General, and Mr. Peter McKimm, chairman of the Arab/Irish Chamber of Commerce, with Professor Burhan Dajani, one of the Arab world's top economists.



Irish Press 14 Jan 1987



Cork Examiner 14 Jan 1987



# 30 Years of Progress

## The AICC 1987-2017

### How it all began

On a snowy day in mid January 1987 the presidents of the Joint Arab-European Chambers of Commerce and the Secretary General of the General Union of Arab Chambers of Commerce, Professor Burhan Dajani, met in Dublin's Westbury Hotel, the first such meeting to be held in Ireland. The "Joint Chambers" in Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, Greece and Switzerland were represented and they had come to support the proposal to establish a new Arab-Irish Chamber of Commerce as part of the growing network of such Chambers in countries with growing commercial relationships with the Arab world.

The visit was facilitated by Peter McKimm who was then Chairman of the Irish Exporters Association and a senior director at Bord Baine/The Irish Dairy Board, an organisation with extensive business connections throughout the Arab markets. Mr. Alan Mc. Carthy, CEO of Coras Trachtala/Irish Export Board (CTT) (now known as Enterprise Ireland) also met the group and offered support and encouragement with the plan to have the new Chamber up and running within three to four months. He also extended a warm welcome to Mr. Rakan Younis who had been nominated by the General Union of Arab Chambers to set up the new Chamber in Dublin and to become its first Secretary General and CEO.

Shortly afterwards Alan Mc. Carthy and Joe Geoghegan, Assistant Chief Executive at CTT, met Peter McKimm and Rakan Younis to discuss how to address the fact that CTT was already providing the same range of trade support services

which the new Chamber planned to offer and on which it would rely to fund its operating costs. These services included the Certification and Legalisation of Commercial Documents, help with Visas to the Arab countries and Arab/English translation services. They were assured that CTT took the view that, as a semi-state body, it should not continue to provide such services if they could be provided effectively by the private sector through the new Chamber. To ensure that it got off to a solid start, it was agreed that CTT would cease offering these services as soon as the Chamber was in a position to provide them. CTT informed all their clients about this new arrangement and referred them to the Chamber when it was fully operational. The transition went very smoothly and the Chamber has provided this one-stop-shop range of services with skill and efficiency continuously since then.



Alastair McGuckian, Rakan Younis and Burhan Dajani met Brian Lenihan TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs, at Leinster House following the AICC first board meeting.

### First Board Meeting and Launch of new Chamber

The Joint Arab-Irish Chamber of Commerce was formally brought into existence through a Special Resolution passed at the first board meeting held on Tuesday 12th May 1987 in the Chamber's new office in 63 Lower Mount Street in Dublin 2. The meeting also formally appointed Mr. Peter McKimm as Chairman and Mr. Rakan Younis as Secretary General and CEO.

That evening the Chamber's formation was announced and celebrated at a reception in the Berkeley Court Hotel which was attended by a broad spectrum of business leaders, politicians, government officials, Arab diplomats and representatives of the media.

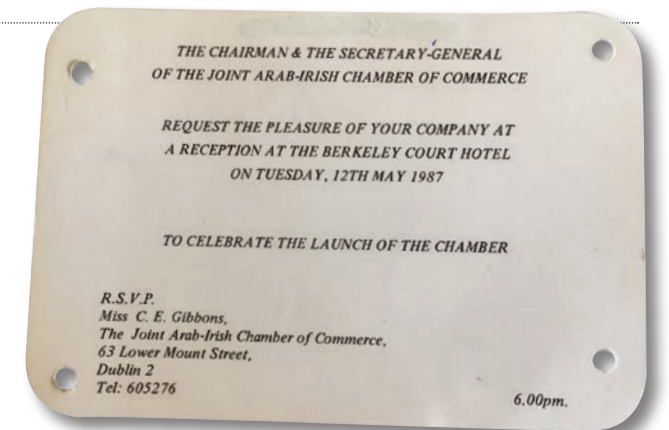
The Minister for Health, Dr. Rory O'Hanlon TD, delivered the opening address on behalf of the Irish Government and spoke of the growing connections between Ireland and the Arab countries in recent years, and the great prospects for expanding these in the future.

"I have great pleasure in accepting your invitation to launch here this evening the Arab-Irish Chamber of Commerce. I feel it is timely to establish a group whose broad aim is the encouragement of Arab-Irish trade and co-operation. The range of services supplied by the Chamber will assist and facilitate trade links for those companies operating in the Arab world" the minister said. He continued "This is a very welcome development in relations between Ireland and the Arab States and indeed, I would hope that the Chamber's establishment would encourage other companies to initiate contacts in the Middle east and North Africa".

Minister O'Hanlon went on to refer to Arab-Irish collaboration in the health field citing the involvement of the PARC Group in the Ibn-Al-Bitar hospital in Baghdad, the success of Irish Health Services Development Corporation in King Khalid Military Hospital, the role of the Irish Nursing Board in nurse training, and the extensive roles of the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal College of Physicians in the provision of education services throughout the region.

He also referred to the Ireland Saudi Joint Commission for Economic and Technical Co-operation which had had its first meeting in Riyadh in April 1986. "This was a particularly successful meeting at which representatives from both the public and private sectors of both countries met to discuss such areas as telecommunications, agriculture, health and transport" he said.

The launch received extensive media coverage and the Arab-Irish Chamber of Commerce opened for business on the following Monday 18th May 1987.



Fitzwilliam Post May 1987

Bulletin of the Department of Foreign Affairs - May/June 1987







P.J. Moriarty, Mr. Tim Pat Coogan, Mr. Rakan Younis and Frank Feely



Irish Times 12 May 1987



Khaleej Times 14 May 1987

**Representing all Arab Chambers of Commerce**

The new Chamber was established under the auspices of the General Union of Arab Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture which is the representative body for all the Chambers of Commerce in the 21 Arab countries. Similar “Joint Chambers” were already established in many countries around the world in addition to Europe.

**A representative Arab-Irish Board**

The board of the Chamber is made up of 12 Arab members nominated by the General Union of Arab Chambers, and twelve Irish members drawn from the membership of the Chamber in Ireland. The membership of the first board represented a broad range of Arab countries and an impressive cross section of Irish companies with interests in the region

**First Arab Directors**

- **H.E. Mr. Nasser Hamad Almalquour** – Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
- **Dr. Burhan al-Dajani** – Secretary General of the General Union of Arab Chambers of Commerce
- **Dr. Abdul Hassan Zalzala** – Deputy Secretary General for Economic Affairs
- **Mr. Abdul Karim al-Mudaris** – Secretary General of the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce
- **Mr. Mahmoud Nashar** – The Council of Saudi Arabian Chambers of Commerce
- **Sheikh Abdulaziz al-Sagar** – President of the Kuwait Chambers of Commerce & Industry
- **Mr. Hamdi Tabba** – President of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of commerce & Industry
- **Mr. Abdel-Qader Abdellatif** – Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Commerce & Industry
- **Sheikh Ahmed Bin Omeir al-Hani** – President of the Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- **Dr. Siddig Busneina** – President of the Federation of Libyan Chambers of Commerce & Industry
- **Mr. Bahdi Fallaha** – The Syrian Chambers of Commerce
- **Mr. Rakan Sabar Younis** – Secretary General and Chief Executive of the Arab-Irish Chamber of Commerce
- **Mr. Peter Mc Kimm** – Irish Exporters Association and Bord Bainne (Irish Dairy Board)
- **Mr. Michael O'Doherty** – Delap & Waller
- **Mr. Louis Maguire** – Auctioneer
- **Mr. James Fay** – Fay International Co. Ltd
- **Mr. Joe Geoghegan** – The Irish Export Board
- **Mr. David Hanley** – PARC Consultants
- **Mr. Alistair McGuckian** – Masstock Ltd
- **Mr. Michael Larkin** – Michael Larkin Associates
- **Mr. Ambrose McInerney** – McInerney & Co. Ltd
- **Mr. Michael Hayden** – Electricity Supply Board
- **Mr. Stephen Malone** – Malone O'Regan

**Arab-Irish Trade – 30 years of growth and change**

In 1988, the year following the Chamber’s establishment, Irish merchandise exports to the Arab world amounted to €372m. This figure has grown to €2.25 billion in 2016.

**TOP 5 MARKETS IN 1988**

1.	Egypt	€102m
2.	Iraq	€85m
3.	Saudi Arabia	€71m
4.	Libya	€25m
5.	U.A.E.	€16m

**TOP 5 MARKETS IN 2016**

1.	Saudi Arabia	€820m
2.	U.A.E.	€384m
3.	Egypt	€219m
4.	Kuwait	€119m
5.	Lebanon	€91m

In 1988 the main product categories exported were manufactured food products, meat, live cattle, dairy products and office machines.

In 2016 this profile has changed dramatically, resulting from the impact of FDI companies now serving the Arab markets from production plants in Ireland, from the expansion of new indigenous Irish businesses into the region and from the rapid growth in the food sector.

**TOP 5 PRODUCT CATEGORIES IN 2016**

1.	Chemicals/Pharmaceuticals	€1,318m
2.	Food & live animals	€434m
3.	Data processing machines equipment	€185m
4.	Machinery & Transport equipment	€172m
5.	Manufactured goods, miscellaneous	€102m

Irish imports from the Arab countries have fluctuated over the years influenced mainly by changes in the volume of petroleum and related products arriving in any year. Total imports in 2016 amounted to €184m of which €33m was accounted for by petroleum products. Other significant categories were vegetables and fruit, fertilizers, plastics, electrical machinery & appliances, clothing and various other manufactured products.





HE Ambassador Ciaran Madden Irish Ambassador to UAE and Mr Aidan Cotter CEO Bord Bia welcoming the Dubai Royal Family to the Irish Pavilion at Gulfood



First meeting of the board at the Chamber's new Headquarters at 34 Fitzwilliam Place

Collaborations and close relationships

From day one the Chamber forged close and long-lasting relationships with all the Arab embassies accredited to Ireland (whether based in Dublin or in London); with the General Union of Arab Chambers; with the key trade development agencies Enterprise Ireland and Bord Bia (Food Board); with the Irish Exporters Association and of course with the Chambers of Commerce in Ireland and in the Arab countries. In fact Enterprise Ireland and Bord Bia have been represented on the Chamber's board from the beginning and have collaborated on many projects and activities over the past three decades.

Prudent management and steady progress

The comparatively low volume of Irish exports to the Arab markets in the 1980's and 1990's meant that the revenues earned by the Chamber in its first decade were limited which restricted its ability to engage in the range of developmental



Caption L to R Rafal Sabir Head Of Translations, Evelyn Harrington Director and Trade Services Manager, Ahmad Younis Secretary-General & CEO, H. E. Ambassador Dr. Saeed Mohammed Al Shamsi Ruth Spain Trade Services Assistant Manager, Orla Treacy Office Assistant, Dima Shannan Office Assistant being presented with and award for outstanding mutual relationship for 30 years.



Khaled Daouk, Vice Chairman, AICC; Joe Geoghegan, Chairman, Arab-Irish Chamber of Commerce; Richard Bruton TD, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation; and Ahmad Younis, Secretary General, Arab-Irish Chamber of Commerce at the official opening of the AICC new Headquarters

activities to which it aspired. However, the arrival of many FDI manufacturing plants in Ireland in the 1990's, which served the Arab markets, led to a significant growth in demand for the Chamber's specialist services and an improvement in its financial fortunes.

This was particularly so in the case of new pharmaceutical companies, medical equipment suppliers, new ICT equipment and service providers, food manufacturers including baby formula products, telecommunications equipment and technologies, soft drink concentrates, financial services including aircraft leasing and a host of other products and services from new foreign owned businesses operating from Ireland.

The growth in the number of indigenous Irish companies also establishing a foothold in the region, due mainly to the great efforts of Bord Bia and Enterprise Ireland, added further to the rise in demand for the Chamber's services.

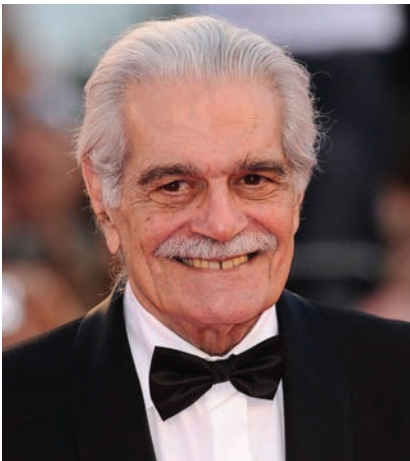
This allowed the Chamber to grow and to expand its range of activities and services in recent years, including a move to a new Head Office at 34 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2.



The AICC is a main sponsor of the Dublin Arabic Film Festival. Zhara Moufid, Festival Director, and The Edge.



Dubai Duty Free Irish Derby



Omar Sharif opened the first Dublin Arabic Film Festival

New Activities and Services

In recent years the Chamber has:

- Published a macro economic study about the medium and long-term opportunities for Ireland in the Arab World
- Initiated the Arab-Irish Business Forum Conference, in partnership with Enterprise Ireland, Emirates Airline, The Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade and Bord Bia.
- Supported publication of the Arab-Irish Journal
- Participated in, and supported, Irish Trade Missions to Arab countries
- Organised work-shops on various aspects of doing business in the Arab markets
- Received and supported business delegations from the region visiting Ireland
- Arranged round-table briefing meetings with Arab ambassadors
- Introduced electronic delivery of certain services
- Supported the formation and activities of the Ireland Saudi Arabia Business Council
- Sponsored and supported the establishment of the Dublin Arabic Film Festival



Rory McIlroy at the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open



Roundtable Meeting with Egyptian Ambassador H.E Soha Gendi

A growing Arab-Irish relationship

When the Chamber started up in 1987 there was only one Arab embassy in Dublin representing Egypt with the remainder represented by their embassies in London. This number has grown to six since then with new missions representing Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Sudan. These embassies have played an important role in facilitating and encouraging further development in bi-lateral trade with their respective countries and the Chamber enjoys a very close and productive relationship with each of them.

In recent years Ireland opened a new embassy in Abu Dhabi to complement its missions in Cairo and Riyadh, while Enterprise Ireland, Bord Bia/Food Board and Tourism Ireland have established new offices in the Middle East. The number of trade missions and other business development activities between Ireland and the Arab markets has increased steadily in both directions. The Chamber has been glad to support these activities whenever possible and looks forward to continuing to do so on an increasing scale in the future.

Arab investments in Ireland have grown appreciably in recent years also, especially in the bloodstock sector, property





Presentation of Arab-Irish Business Forum Award to Alastair McGuckian



Yassir Arafat and Rakan Younis

and financial services. In addition we have seen growing support for major sporting events such as Dubai Duty Free sponsorship of the Irish Derby and the Dublin Arabic Film Festival; Etihad’s past support for the GAA, Emirate’s sponsorship of the Irish Open and Qatar Airline’s new partnership with the Dublin Horse Show.

There are now more than 13,000 Irish people living and working in the Arab countries and around the same number of Arabs living in Ireland including several thousand students.

Arising from these and many other such developments Ireland’s relationship with the Arab world has expanded and deepened significantly in recent years, and the close and friendly connections now established look destined to continue to grow strongly in the future.

Looking to the Future

The Arab markets represent one of the biggest trading regions for Ireland outside of Europe and North America and can be expected to grow in importance in the coming decades.

Today the population of the Arab countries is around 365 million people compared to 500 million in the EU. By 2050 there will be 620 million consumers in the Arab world compared to less than 450 million in the EU by then. With growing wealth, expectations and discretionary spending power, as well as massive infrastructural and social needs, these markets will offer a broad array of significant opportunities for many Irish companies in the coming decades.

There are over 400 Irish companies doing business in the region today and this number should double over the next ten years. The region has the advantage of being only a few hours flying time away, has a growing population and a need



An Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) Enda Kenny T.D. Meets the Irish Saudi Arabia Business Council.



Minister Richard Bruton T.D. Launching The Arab Irish Economic Report

to import many products and services which Ireland can supply competitively. Daily, non-stop flights to the Gulf have boosted bi-lateral business activity in the GCC region and new connections with North Africa, currently under consideration, will accelerate business growth to the main Mediterranean Arab markets in the coming years.

We can expect a sharp increase in focus on the Arab region as Irish businesses seek to diversify in response to the impact of Brexit on their UK business and in response to the anticipated trends in international trade and the growing attractiveness of the Arab markets.

Joe Geoghegan

Joe Geoghegan is the current Chairman of the Arab-Irish Chamber of Commerce (AICC). When the Chamber was first established in 1987 Joe was Assistant Chief Executive, Marketing Services, at Coras Trachtala/Irish Export Board (CTT) where he worked closely with the CEO, Alan Mc Carthy. He played a key role in supporting the establishment of the AICC including the transfer of CTT’s trade documentation services for the Arab countries to the new chamber. He was invited to become a director of the AICC at its foundation and attended its first board meeting. He has served as a director of the Chamber for the past 30 years including as Chairman for the past four years. He is also the Honorary Consul of Jordan in Ireland.

Louis Maguire

Louis Maguire attended the first board meeting of the Chamber and served as a director until his retirement in January 2017. He succeeded Peter McKimm as Chairman in 1999. He is also the Honorary Consul of Tunisia in Ireland



Ahmad Younis

Ahmad Younis is the current Secretary General & CEO of the AICC having taken up the position in January 2010. Born in Baghdad, he moved to Ireland with the rest of the Younis family in 1987 and is now a fully integrated Dubliner.



Rakan Younis

Prior to being appointed to set up the new Arab-Irish Chamber of Commerce, Rakan Younis was Director General of the State Organisation for Textiles, at the Ministry of Industry in Iraq where he was responsible for a workforce of over 22,000 people. Born in Mosul, he was one of eight final year high school students awarded a prestigious National Scholarship to study at Cardiff University in the UK where he excelled at mathematics. He later studied at the Lotz Research Institute in Poland where he received a diploma in textile engineering. Rakan was also a founding member of the Arab Union of Textiles as well as a former champion long jumper in his youth. He skilfully steered the AICC through its formative years and was much admired and respected by the Chamber’s members and clients, by the General Union of Arab Chambers as well as by his peers in the other Joint Chambers in Europe and around the world.

