

**In Washington, D.C.:**

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**Trade Facilitation a Priority in Regulatory Reforms in the Middle East and North Africa**

**Washington, D.C., November 4, 2010**—In the past year, 11 of 18 economies in the Middle East and North Africa adopted a total of 22 business regulation reforms to create opportunity for domestic entrepreneurs, according to *Doing Business 2011: Making a Difference for Entrepreneurs*, the eighth in a series of annual reports published by IFC and the World Bank.

Trade facilitation was high on the priority list. Six economies in the region modernized customs procedures and port infrastructure—Bahrain, the Arab Republic of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and West Bank and Gaza. Also popular was improving credit information systems, which occurred in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the United Arab Emirates.

In the past five years, about 85 percent of the world's economies made it easier for local entrepreneurs to operate, through 1,511 improvements to business regulation. *Doing Business 2011* pioneers a new measure showing how much business regulation has changed in 174 economies since 2005. By this measure, Saudi Arabia and Egypt were among the 15 most active economies.

Many of the region's business regulation reforms in the past year involved new information technologies. Tunisia led the world in improving the ease of paying taxes by introducing electronic systems for payment. The country also upgraded its electronic data interchange system for imports and exports.

"New technology underpins regulatory best practice around the world," said Dahlia Khalifa, an author of the report. "Technology makes compliance easier, less costly, and more transparent."

Saudi Arabia, the region's highest-ranking economy on the overall ease of doing business (with a global ranking of 11 among 183 economies), focused on four areas of business regulation in the past year. It streamlined construction permitting, launched a new container terminal at Jeddah Islamic Port, made secured lending more flexible, and sped up the insolvency process by providing earlier access to amicable settlements.

Egypt continued to move up in the global rankings, rising five places to 94. In the past year, Egypt reduced the cost of business start-up and made trading easier by introducing an electronic system for submitting export and import documents.

**About the *Doing Business* report series**

*Doing Business* analyzes regulations that apply to an economy's businesses during their life cycle, including start-up and operations, trading across borders, paying taxes, and closing a business. *Doing Business* does not measure all aspects of the business environment that matter to firms and investors. For example, it does not measure security, macroeconomic stability, corruption, skill level, or the strength of financial systems. Its findings have stimulated policy debates in more than 80 economies and enabled a growing body of research on how firm-level regulation relates to economic outcomes across economies. For more information about the *Doing Business* report series, please visit: [www.doingbusiness.org](http://www.doingbusiness.org)

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