

Press Release

KIF 2018 focuses on strengthening financial environment to promote sustainable growth

Kuwait, March 21, 2018: A key session on the second day of the Kuwait Investment Forum (KIF 2018) discussed the financial landscape for sustainable development in the country. Experts focused on aspects such as the banking system and advanced financing, the new investment channels offered by the country, the upgrade of the Kuwait Bourse and the role of the Capital Markets Authority in diversifying investment tools, the challenges in fintech, credits and guarantees assured for investors and the experience of foreign banks in Kuwait.

The session was addressed by: Mr. Mohammad Yousef Al-Hashel, Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait; Mr. Mishaal Mussaid Al Usaimi – Vice Chairman of the Board of Commissioners and acting Managing Director, Capital Markets Authority; Mr. Isam Jassem Al-Sager – Group Chief Executive Officer, National Bank of Kuwait; Mr. Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq, Chairman – Kuwait Finance House; and Mr. Jason Channell – Managing Director and Global Head of Energy & Cleantech, Citi Research in London.

Mr. Mohammad Yousef Al-Hashel said: “Kuwait has a clear vision and economic policies to achieve its development goals, and to drive sustainable development for the good of future generations. Our geographic location and legislative framework, centred on transparency, and good financial fundamentals are our assets. With low inflation, promising growth in non-oil GDP, we have directed our investments in building our infrastructure. The strong and stable credit ratings, balanced monetary policy, stable exchange rates, and a strong banking system further add to the strength of the economy. Our banking sector is strong with assets increasing and bad debts decreasing, all of which are indicators of a strong macro-economic environment for inward investments.”

Mr. Mishaal Mussaid Al Usaimi said that a key priority of the Capital Markets Authority is to drive market development with a second phase of reforms to be implemented on April 1 this year. He said new products will be launched and new listing rules are being mooted. With high levels of compliance by the listed companies to corporate governance measures, CMA is working on a phased approach to bring new reforms, with three more phases to be launched in 2018 and 2019 that will make Kuwait’s capital market more competitive and stimulate broader market liquidity.

On Kuwait’s upgrade to emerging market status by FTSE, he said that “our guiding principle has always been to strengthen the confidence of local investors, which will in turn attract more international investors. Kuwait’s capital market is the most sophisticated in the region and very competitive.”

Mr. Isam Jassem Al-Sager said that National Bank of Kuwait has been a key supported in driving the infrastructure development plans of the government, adding that NBK's simplified procedures have strengthened transparency. The focus is to strengthen banking sector effectiveness and to boost liquidity. "Our banking sector benefits from the rigorous monitoring and governance procedures that inspires market confidence."

Mr. Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq said the country's banking sector has high quality assets and the high levels of banking penetration, higher than OECD average, is an indicator of the robust system. With 38 per cent of the financial institutions being Islamic banks, there is greater flexibility, adding that Kuwait Finance House has a number of high-value investments globally.

Mr. Jason Channell said the regulatory changes in the banking and capital markets of Kuwait make it extraordinarily transparent, adding that Kuwait offers huge opportunities for international investors. The coherent infrastructure investment plan will drive investments, especially with the Silk City serving as a blank canvas for creating a smart city for the future.

Held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber, KIF 2018 is co-organised by the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), and the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI). For more details, visit: kif.kdipa.gov.kw

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Note to Editors

About Kuwait Investment Forum 2018:

Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the second edition of the Kuwait Investment Forum (KIF2018) to be held March 20 and 21, 2018, at the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre (JACC), Kuwait City, supports the concerted efforts to boosting Kuwait's economy and improving its business competitiveness.

The two-day forum is co-organised by the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), and the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI). It aims to reaffirm the government's interest in promoting and facilitating value-added investments into Kuwait's dynamic market, which focuses on the private sector leading economic activity, innovation and competitiveness.

Supporting the Kuwait Vision 2035, KIF 2018 will provide an interactive platform that brings together high-ranking government officials, local and foreign investors, industry leaders and executives, consultants and financial institutions, to showcase developments that underline Kuwait's business environment, investment opportunities, and emerging trends.

www.kif.kdipa.gov.kw

About Kuwait Business Climate:

Among the drivers of Kuwait's investment landscape are its central location, effortless connectivity, high quality of life, modern infrastructure, robust legal framework, strong macroeconomic fundamentals, sound banking system and low political risk. Kuwait ranks 30 of 137 countries for its overall macroeconomic

environment, as per the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report 2017-18, in addition to being ranked as the world's third most attractive tax regime.

The country ranks 96th in the World Bank Ease of Doing Business Report, higher than the Middle East average, and has an Economic Freedom Score of 62.2, making it the 5th freest in the region. With its uniquely democratic and stable government, Kuwait benefits from a National Constitution that embraces liberal, democratic values.

For more information, please contact:

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