



Los Angeles Area
Chamber of Commerce

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 10, 2006

CONTACT: Marie Condon
213.925.9605
Gwen Oldham
310.552.4191
Cari Eggspuehler, BDA
415.608.0806

**EIGHT U.S. MIDDLE EAST AMBASSADORS JOIN
SENIOR U.S. BUSINESS LEADERS IN L.A.
TO PROMOTE TRADE WITH THE MIDDLE EAST
AND WORK TO BUILD NEW BRIDGES OF RESPECT AND
MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING**

***So. Cal. Regional District Export Council, L.A. Area Chamber, U.S. Department
of Commerce, and senior U.S. business leaders partner to
promote 'corporate diplomacy' through trade***

LOS ANGELES – In a remarkable gathering today, more than 250 regional business leaders met in downtown Los Angeles with eight United States Ambassadors to the Middle East to discuss developing strategic, private sector trade connections with the region.

“Given the growing need to shift the international dialogue from foreign policy to civil society, it has never been more important for the U.S. business community to engage the Middle East through corporate diplomacy programs for individual growth and development. In addition to the real benefits for young people in the Arab world, the positive implications of such actions for our economic and national security are obvious,” said keynote speaker Keith Reinhard, chairman emeritus of DDB Worldwide and president of Business for Diplomatic Action, at the day-long conference, which was presented by the Southern California District Export Council, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, and U.S. Department of Commerce.

Featuring an unprecedented number of U.S. Ambassadors from across the region, to include Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and the United Arab Emirates, the event explored ways corporate diplomacy efforts and increased international trade between the U.S. and Middle East not only strengthens economies, but fosters mutual respect and understanding.

“The United Arab Emirates ranks as the largest export market for the United States for the Middle East/Africa region,” said Ambassador Michele Sison, who represents the U.S. in the UAE. “These growing commercial ties should be leveraged to encourage massive corporate diplomacy in a region that has significant strategic and economic importance to our country.”

-- more --

From the private sector, keynote speakers Reinhard and Michael Ducker, president of FedEx Express International, discussed trade initiatives that could be expanded upon, noting that there has never been a more critical time for business to engage with the region.

“It is up to each of us, whether we are in the public or private sector, to facilitate trade so that more countries and people can participate in the growing global prosperity,” said Ducker.

Today’s attendees engaged in dialogues with the ambassadors and senior commercial officers about the business environment and country specific opportunities in the region. Ambassadors spoke at breakout panel discussions highlighting the benefits of doing business with their respective countries—noting that misperceptions exist about the region’s economies and that the demand for U.S. products is high.

One country with increased focus and attention at the event was Jordan. “Jordan’s successful experience in economic reform, its friendly business environment and fast growing opportunities make it an ideal ‘first market’ in the Middle East for U.S. firms,” said David Hale, U.S. Ambassador to Jordan.

Reinhard discussed recent BDA commissioned Zogby research in the UAE. “According to young people in the region, the U.S. remains the preferred destination for education and professional development and U.S. companies are seen as most likely to be helpful—all of which suggests significant opportunities for U.S. businesses to build ties with Arab youth in the region.”

Ambassadors speaking at the event included: Hale, Sison, Ambassador to Algeria Robert S. Ford, Ambassador to Bahrain William Monroe, Ambassador to Egypt Francis J. Ricciardone, Ambassador to Israel Richard H. Jones, Ambassador to Kuwait Richard LeBaron, and Ambassador to Morocco Thomas T. Riley.

The ambassadors will continue their speaking engagement in Chicago from Oct. 12 - 13 and New York from Oct. 16 – 17.

Attached are a summary of the Oct. 3 Zogby report on attitudes of young Arab leaders toward U.S. businesses, as well as today’s full conference program.

-- # # # --

The Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce represents the interests of business in L.A. County. Founded in 1888, the Chamber promotes a prosperous economy and quality of life in the Los Angeles region. For more information visit www.lachamber.org.

For More Information on Business for Diplomatic Action go to: www.businessfordiplomaticaction.org or contact Cari L. Eggspuehler, Executive Director on 415.608.0806.