

**Minutes of the OBFA Board Meeting held at the residence of Shawqi Sultan on October 12<sup>th</sup> 2017 at 4:30 pm.**

Present:

Maqbool A Sultan (MAS) – Chairman  
Shawqi A Sultan (SAS) – Secretary General  
HMA Hamish Cowell (HC) – Honorary Member  
Saleh Taleb Al Zakwani (ST) – Board Member  
Chris Breeze (CB) – Board Member  
Andrew Long (AL) – Board Member  
Sarika Breeze (SB)

**AGENDA**

- 1) Actions arising and follow-up from the first OBFA talks on May 14<sup>th</sup> 2017
- 2) Next OBFA talks – topics and dates
- 3) Follow-up from UK July 7<sup>th</sup> Presentation
- 4) Lord Mayor's visit
- 5) Relationship between OBFA and OBBC, NGG, AOS and DIT
- 6) Sarika's introduction, roles and responsibilities

The Chairman welcomed the attendees and confirmed that Pankaj Khimji and Nicholas Pattison had sent their apologies. Subsequently Khalil Khonji sent his apologies and Ahmed Al Arami called from London, where he had to go on an unexpected visit.

1. MAS said the **May Talks on Training and Work Experience** ran very successfully, and the location (Bait al Zubair) was also excellent. 35 people attended, instead of the expected 50-55, so future events should focus on ensuring all those who have been invited and could benefit from being there are reminded by a phone call from either SAS or SB. MAS highlighted that follow-up could also be improved.

The National Training Fund (NTF), Chaired by the Minister of Oil & Gas, pays for Omanis to be trained, in various sectors. MAS said that the problem is often broader than Omanisation, in that few Omanis unfortunately are keen to be employed in the private sector for e.g. automotive repair, but the NTF is helping. HC highlighted the need for Omanis to be trained to international standards in order to work at a high level and abroad. However, MAS suggested that in order for them to get that experience they have to be mentored and those that show enthusiasm and commitment should be encouraged to get training abroad. SAS said that in the past some trainees had a problem getting working visa, e.g. in the UK where a visitor is not permitted to work and where getting a working visa is difficult.

2. The **next OBFA talks** will be held Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017 at 17:00. The subject will be Future Energies. CB suggested Dr Firas Abduwani and Qais al Zakwani as speakers and he can also try and get a speaker from Shell. SAS suggested a speaker from Outward Bound. HC offered to ask an expert from the UK to speak. Solar is a potential area within Future Energies, and it could broaden to electric cars etc. AL

highlighted that the talks should incorporate all parts of the process of generating and using new energies, and that we should target British companies. .

3. **July's Investors' Breakfast** were successful in the presentations made by Talal Ar Rahbi on Tanfeedh and Saleh on Duqm but discussion with investors is crucial, and CB suggested SB should telephone Rob O'Halloran of HSBC under whose aegis this breakfast was organised, to discuss follow-up on their end.
4. HC said the dates of the **Lord Mayor's visit** have not been finalised yet. AL suggested that we discuss how we could encourage the investors accompanying the Lord Mayor to invest in Oman. Talk about this with Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles when he visits Muscat.
5. MAS said OBFA should work with and encourage **AOS** in Oman, known here as the New Generation Group (NGG). **NGG**, however has no legal status here, but CB suggested that for the sake of creating synergy OBFA should work alongside them. Board members agreed that increased interaction and collaboration between various groups would be beneficial. Gareth Stevens, the recently appointed head of the Department of International Trade (**DIT**) here, can be contacted for arranging a meeting with British businesses in Oman. HC offered to host the Oman British Business Forum (**BBF**), DIT and OBFA members.
6. Nick Pattison had suggested that **Sarika's role** be: handling communications with OBFA members and the board, updating OBFA website, organising events, liaising with AOS, OBBC, BBF and DIT, and making sure activities are coordinated. CB suggested adding follow-up. SB to write to each member about the website and ask for their comments. In terms of updating the website, information on taxes, Omanisation, etc. should be available.
7. ST mentioned that tourism should be a principal focus in getting domestic investment as it has a multiplier effect. It is the main growing industry. CB asked whether there are many training programmes to prepare people for working in tourism, and he and AL spoke of young independent tour guides who find it very hard to establish companies here. It was suggested that perhaps ST and CB meet with Juma, one of the tourist guides, to discuss the problems they face.

With there being no other business the Chairman thanked those present for their attendance and closed the meeting at 5:45 pm.