

## Sustainable Development and Egyptian Exports Growth

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Sustainable development is viewed as the main principle for achieving human development goals while, in tandem, preserving the natural resources necessary for meeting the different economic and social needs. Thus, it is noted that the term has "an environmental nature" being the result of an international panel known as "The Brundtland Commission" or officially "the International Commission on Environment and Development of the United Nations", which was created in 1983.

Despite the importance of the environmental dimension in comprising the term of sustainable development, the evolution of the term led to the inclusion of both the economic and societal dimensions being key objectives in the process of sustainable development. This has evolved the concept of Sustainable Development to include various processes that aim at preserving the ecosystem while achieving maximum economic benefit in line with meeting societal goals such as equal opportunities, raising the standard of living, and human capacity development.

Indeed the evolution of the term of sustainability was not isolated from the plans of the different governments, as well as the strategies of the major international companies as a response to the ever changing global conditions whether the human, economic, or ecological ones. This has prompted the Egyptian government to develop the "2030 Sustainable Development Strategy" based on four main axes namely (economic development, environment, knowledge and innovation, and social justice). For more information, please visit <http://sdsegypt2030.com/>.<sup>1</sup>

Turning to the economic development axis, we find that the core pillars of this axis include: (integrating the informal sector into the formal economy, easing the inflationary pressures, as well as increased public revenues), which are also consistent with the government's plan for the growth of Egyptian exports in order to reach a total volume of non-oil exports of \$ 30 billion in 2020, compared with \$ 20 billion at the end of 2016, as the application of the principles of sustainable development will lead to the upgrading of the Egyptian industry and thus the growth of Egyptian exports. A good case study can be seen in the strive to achieve sustainability in the procurement process which is addressed by the ISO 20400 published in mid April 2017, and its impact on export growth, as follows:

- ISO 20400 has stipulated several issues to be met in the supplying facility like non-discrimination between workers, respect for fundamental rights, adhere to environmental standards, capacity development, technology dissemination, maintaining

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<sup>1</sup> See graph 2 for the pillars of Egypt's SDGs 2030 "Dr. Nihal El Megharbel – Ministry of Planning"

the confidentiality of the information of the consumer and the buyer, community development, and fair competition.

- The fulfillment of these issues by any Egyptian supplier will lead to several positive points notably: enhancing the quality of the provided goods/services, energy efficiency, cost reduction, speeding up the integration of the informal sector into the formal economy (as a result of contractual stipulations to be met by the facility), and the adoption of modern technology that the buyer is committed to provide as a form of support in accordance with the new ISO 20400.
- A number of state agencies enhance sustainable procurement process, where the Egyptian Organization for Standardization and Quality (EOS) undertakes the technical secretariat of a national technical committee to discuss the amendments and comments on the ISO 20400 in line with Egypt's international obligations, then a plan is adopted for the formulation of a corresponding national standard in coordination with all the relevant authorities, whether the official or business community and civil society.
- Egypt's commercial representation bureaus abroad "ECS offices" through their constant communication with both the foreign governments and business stakeholders shall identify the most prominent quality and price requirements plus any certification requirements that must be met to export a certain good, then communicate such requirements to the concerned authorities in Egypt, whether governmental or business, to ensure the reflection of those requirements on a theoretical level (national standards), as well as on the business level (the actual production system within the Egyptian industrial plants) so as to promote Egyptian exports in overseas markets.

In the end, the development of the procurement process by adding the sustainability element, and the existence of a structured framework for such a process whether on the B2B or B2C levels, would strengthen and develop the production process, both quality and safety standards, environmental standards, requirements for employment, technology transfer, fair competition, anti-corruption, and other practices that enhance the competitiveness of Egyptian companies with their counterparts in the global market.