MENA FCCG Marks a Decade of Collective Action at 10th Anniversary Plenary Meeting in Bahrain

Senior regional leaders, regulators, law enforcement officials and financial-sector experts convene to advance financial integrity, address emerging threats and shape the next decade of cooperation



The MENA FCCG 10th Anniversary Plenary Meeting, Bahrain — 12 November 2026

MANAMA, BAHRAIN | 12 NOVEMBER 2026

The MENA Financial Crime Compliance Group (MENA FCCG) convened its 10th Anniversary Plenary Meeting at Raffles Al Areen Palace, Bahrain, bringing together distinguished leaders from **regulatory authorities, law enforcement agencies, international organizations, academia, and the financial sector** to strengthen regional and international cooperation in combating financial crime.

Hosted by Bank ABC and jointly sponsored by Bank ABC, Arab Bank and MENA FCCG, the meeting marked a significant milestone for the Group, which was established in Bahrain in 2016 with a shared commitment to addressing financial crime through collective action, knowledge sharing and sustained collaboration.

Under the theme "**Together, We Shape a Second Decade of Collective Action,"** the Plenary examined evolving financial crime threats, sanctions and geopolitical risks, virtual asset misuse, artificial intelligence and the importance of translating regulatory frameworks and industry cooperation into measurable outcomes.

Before the opening addresses, the lights dimmed for a powerful 90-second cinematic presentation, combining dramatic lighting, dynamic visuals and an energizing musical score. **Shared Purpose, Shared Learning, Shared Courage and Shared Accountability** converged in a message of collective impact, culminating in the declaration: "Our Mission Endures Because Our Commitment to Collective Integrity Endures."

Click here to experience the 10th Anniversary Opening Film

Distinguished Leadership and Opening Addresses

The Plenary opened with remarks delivered virtually by **Dr. Wissam H. Fattouh**, Chair of MENA FCCG and Secretary General of the Union of Arab Banks, who recognized the Group's decade of achievements and the collective contributions of its members and collaborators in advancing financial integrity across the region.

H.E. Hamid Saif Al Zaabi, President of MENAFATF, delivered a keynote address highlighting the regional body's efforts to strengthen frameworks for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing, with particular emphasis on improving the effectiveness of national and regional responses. His participation underscored the complementary objectives of MENAFATF and MENA FCCG in promoting stronger financial systems, regional cooperation and sustainable economic growth.



H.E. Hamid Saif Al Zaabi delivering the opening keynote

The opening session also featured a keynote by **Shaikha May Al Khalifa**, Chief Executive of Bahrain's Financial Intelligence National Center (FINC), who emphasized sustained dialogue and information sharing between public authorities and financial institutions, and the value of constructive public-private engagement in achieving more effective financial crime prevention outcomes.



Shaikha May Al Khalifa addressing the Plenary



Distinguished keynote speakers and senior leaders at the MENA FCCG 10th Anniversary Plenary Meeting.

A Decade of Achievement — A Commitment to the Future

Michael Matossian, Chief Compliance Officer of Arab Bank and Founder and Deputy Chair of MENA FCCG, reflected on the Group's journey from a shared vision in 2016 to an established regional platform for cooperation, professional development and practical initiatives. He emphasized the trust, shared purpose and willingness to work beyond institutional and national boundaries that have sustained the Group.

- **Build Individual Capability** — Translate international standards and emerging risks into practical regional guidance, tools and professional development.
- **Strengthen Institutional Capacity** — Support institutions and emerging markets through knowledge sharing, technical assistance and collective learning.
- **Connect and Collaborate** — Bring together financial institutions, regulators, law enforcement and international organizations to address shared challenges.

> **"Our first decade demonstrated the power of collective action. Our second decade must demonstrate its lasting impact. By building capability, strengthening capacity and connecting public- and private-sector institutions across borders, we can translate shared purpose into meaningful outcomes for our region and the societies we serve."**
> *— Michael Matossian, Founder and Deputy Chair, MENA FCCG*

Advancing Regional Integrity Through Practical Initiatives

A tangible example of collective action highlighted at the Plenary was the MENA FCCG–GCFFC Anti-Bribery and Corruption Initiative, comprising two complementary tools. The MENA Region ABC Dashboard draws on publicly available information to provide an external perspective on political, economic and criminal risk dimensions, identifying vulnerabilities and opportunities for improvement. The Private Sector ABC Self-Assessment Tool provides a voluntary framework for institutions to assess anti-bribery and corruption maturity, identify gaps and establish priorities for continuous improvement. Together, the initiatives seek to strengthen awareness, shared understanding and informed action across the region.

Addressing the Financial Crime Challenges of Tomorrow

Five expert panel discussions brought together senior representatives from regulatory authorities, international organizations, law enforcement, financial institutions and technology companies.

1 | Advancing Financial Integrity in MENA: Global Leadership, Regional Action

The panel examined evolving financial crime risks, the effectiveness of AML/CFT frameworks, national risk assessments and the translation of international standards into demonstrable operational outcomes. Moderated by Chip Poncy of K2 Integrity, it featured Suliman Aljabrin of MENAFATF; Mohamed Shalo of the UAE national AML/CFT framework; Nermine Kamal of the Central Bank of Egypt; and Lara Murad of the U.S. Treasury, who joined virtually.

2 | The New Financial Crime Landscape

The discussion addressed emerging threats, virtual asset misuse and interconnected financial and digital ecosystems, emphasizing coordinated detection, investigation and prevention. Moderated by John Cusack, former Co-Chair of the Wolfsberg Group, the panel featured Khalid Bubshait of Saudi Arabia's Nazaha; Sara Qaed of the Central Bank of Bahrain; and Scott Ramsay, Group Head of Compliance and Bank MLRO at Mashreq Bank.

3 | Geopolitics, Sanctions and Financial Integrity

This session examined sanctions evasion, proliferation-financing risks, hidden networks and complex cross-border commercial relationships, balancing effective risk management with legitimate trade and financial access. Moderated by Antoine Hobeiche, Advisor to MENA FCCG, it featured Sarah Runge and Ladan Archin of K2 Integrity, and Francesco Miorin and Carlotta Zenere of UNICRI.

4 | Integrating AI and Advanced Analytics to Enhance Detection

The session explored network analytics, data integration, governance and the shift toward connected, intelligence-led financial crime compliance. Moderated by Nishanth Nottath of Emirates NBD, it featured Martin Markiewicz, CEO and Co-Founder of Silent Eight, and Mutaz Zakaria, Acting Group Head of Innovation and Digital at Bank ABC.

5 | Leveraging AI, Blockchain and Intelligent Automation

The panel considered the responsible use of emerging technologies in financial crime detection, virtual asset tracing and investigations, with attention to explainability, governance and skilled human judgment. Moderated by David Shepherd, Advisor to MENA FCCG, it featured Dickon Johnstone of Themis; Tom Armstrong of TRM Labs (virtual); Eman Gammoh of Arab Bank; and Major Tony Kiwan of Lebanon's Internal Security Forces (virtual).

Across the five sessions, a consistent message emerged: effective financial crime prevention requires stronger collaboration, better use of information, responsible adoption of technology and a sustained focus on measurable results.

Shaping the Second Decade of Collective Action

The Plenary concluded with a special virtual contribution by H.E. Samya Abou Sharif, Head of Jordan's Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Terrorist Financing Unit and MENAFATF President in 2025. Her reflections focused on emerging financial crime risks, the implications of artificial intelligence and the importance of professional capabilities, institutional coordination and public-private cooperation.

Building on these perspectives, Michael Matossian facilitated an interactive closing discussion inviting members and participants to identify emerging risks, capability gaps and transformative opportunities. The session emphasized expanding the Group's reach, strengthening collective capabilities and delivering measurable outcomes.

> **"The Journey Continues. The Outcome Depends on All of Us."**

Together, We Shape a Second Decade of Collective Action.

About MENA FCCG

Established in Bahrain in 2016, the MENA Financial Crime Compliance Group is a voluntary, industry-led initiative bringing together leading financial institutions from across the Middle East and North Africa. It promotes collective action through professional development, practical guidance, information sharing, institutional collaboration and engagement with regional and international stakeholders. Its mission is to strengthen financial integrity, support effective compliance and contribute to a more trusted and resilient financial environment.

Working Together, We Are Making a Difference.