**PRESS RELEASE**

For immediate release

Nouakchott, Mauritania, May 18, 2023:

**The IMF, APIM, and JCCM hold roundtable discussions with youth on inclusive growth and challenges and opportunities for entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa.**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Investment Promotion Agency of Mauritania (APIM), and the Youth Chamber of Commerce of Mauritania (JCCM) organized a roundtable discussion today, May 18, 2023, in Nouakchott on inclusive growth and challenges and opportunities for entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa.

This roundtable is one of a series of events organized by the IMF in the MENA region ahead of the World Bank-IMF Annual Meetings, which will be held in Marrakech, Morocco, in October 2023.

The roundtable consisted of opening remarks by the **Minister of Economic Affairs and the Promotion of Productive Sectors of Mauritania (Mr. Ousmane Mamoudou Kane)**, a presentation on the IMF book on Inclusive Growth in the Middle East and North Africa by the IMF Resident Representative (Ms. Anta Ndoye), and a presentation on Mauritania’s one stop shop by the Investment Promotion Agency (Ms. Fatimetou Bellamech).

During the roundtable, speakers discussed topics including the causes and macroeconomic effects of large gender gaps in MENA labor markets, the implications of and potential policy responses to still-limited access to financial services for many households and firms in the region, and impediments for startups, including the regulatory obstacles facing entrepreneurs.

In this context, Ms. **Anta Ndoye, IMF resident representative in Mauritania**, said that: "A decade after the Arab Spring, providing greater and more equitable opportunities for all, especially youth, women, and entrepreneurs, remains an essential priority for the region. The new global challenges posed by the pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine should not derail regional efforts toward a more inclusive development model. On the contrary, countries must remain even more committed to reforms that will result in more resilient economies, while creating opportunities for all."

For her part, Ms. **Aissata LAM, the Director-General of the Investment Promotion Agency of Mauritania (APIM)**, stated that: "Although many countries in the region have made significant progress in promoting economic and social inclusion, there is still a long way to go to ensure equal opportunities for all economic actors, especially in terms of financing and administrative support. APIM's objective is to contribute to filling this gap through our internal services, in particular the one stop shop for companies, the collection of gender-segregated data and the promotion of gender-sensitive public policies, especially in the area of investment. "

The roundtable discussions, which lasted for two hours, saw broad participation from public and private actors in Mauritania, as well as representatives from regional and international organizations.

**About the IMF:**

The [International Monetary Fund (IMF)](http://www.imf.org) is an international institution consisting of 190 countries, with the aim of "promoting international monetary cooperation, facilitating international trade, promoting economic growth and discouraging economic policies that may harm prosperity."

**About APIM:**

The [Investment Promotion Agency of Mauritania (APIM)](https://apim.gov.mr/) is a public institution created in February 2021 to guide the national policy in terms of creating investment opportunities in order to generate more added value, create jobs, and increase the productive and industrial capacities of the country. In this regard, since its establishment, the APIM has been able to create over 10,000 companies and issue more than 77 investment certificates worth 41 billion MRU.

**About JCCM:**

The [Youth Chamber of Commerce of Mauritania (JCCM)](https://www.facebook.com/JeuneChambreDeCommerceDeMauritanie/?locale=ms_MY) is an organization whose purpose is to promote entrepreneurship, support young project holders, and strengthen the capacities of its members. Offering a modern and collaborative work environment conducive to creativity, the JCCM's i-Lab is based on a model of learning by experience and immersion. It allows members to explore all spheres of entrepreneurship, meet and exchange with their peers, test their business models, and bring their ideas to life in a growing ecosystem.

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