UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
MINISTRY OF ECONOMY & TOURISM

Dubai, 28-29 October 2026

Seventh
ARAB COMPETITION FORUM (ACF)



E/ESCWA/CL6.GCP/2026/ACF/Agenda

Agenda

Background information

Competition policies remain fundamental to both advanced and developing economies, supporting market efficiency, innovation and inclusive economic growth. In recent years, rapid digital transformation has significantly reshaped market structures, business models and competitive dynamics, raising new questions related to fairness, equality of opportunity and market access. Like other regions, Arab countries are increasingly engaging with the implications of the digital economy for competition policy, as digital platforms, data-driven activities and technology-enabled services play a growing role across economic sectors.

The expansion of digital markets offers important opportunities for innovation, productivity gains and consumer welfare. At the same time, it presents policy challenges related to market concentration, access to data, interoperability and the risk of unequal competitive conditions. Ensuring that digital markets remain open, contestable and fair has therefore become an increasingly important consideration for competition policy frameworks in the Arab region, particularly given differing levels of digital readiness and institutional capacity across countries.

Against this backdrop, there is a growing need to reflect on how competition policy can adapt to the digital age, not only to preserve competitive market outcomes, but also to promote fairness, equality and consumer trust in digital environments. Addressing these issues calls for policy dialogue, knowledge-sharing and enhanced regional cooperation to exchange experiences and explore approaches suited to the specific characteristics of digital markets in the Arab region.

In this context, the seventh Arab Competition Forum will be organized by its three founding partners, namely the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA),

United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in addition to the COMESA Competition and Consumer Commission (CCCC). It will be held in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, on 28 and 29 October 2026, in partnership with the Competition Department under the Ministry of Economy and Tourism of the United Arab Emirates.

The Forum will examine the implications of digital transformation for competition policy in the Arab region, and explore how competition frameworks can promote fairness, equality of opportunity and well-functioning markets in the digital economy. It will address emerging challenges, policy considerations and best practices related to digital markets, while fostering knowledge-sharing, cooperation and peer learning at the national, regional and international levels.

Objectives

The seventh Arab Competition Forum, on the theme **"Competition policy in the digital age: maintaining fairness and equality in the market",** aims to undertake the following:

- Promote fair, inclusive and sustainable economic growth by strengthening the application of competition policy in digital and data-driven markets, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Strengthen regional and international cooperation among competition authorities to address cross-border challenges arising from digital platforms, data concentration and technology-driven market power.
- Enhance digital competition policy and enforcement tools, including the use of data, algorithms and technological solutions, to better detect exclusionary conduct, market foreclosure and unfair competitive practices in digital markets.
- Facilitate the exchange of best practices and policy experiences among ESCWA member States on ensuring fair access, interoperability, innovation and consumer welfare in the digital economy, while maintaining competitive neutrality and equality of opportunity.

Participants

The Forum will bring together representatives from competition authorities in Arab countries, academia, the United Nations and international and regional organizations, and experts in competition policy and enforcement.

Meeting Language

The meeting will be conducted in Arabic and English, with simultaneous interpretation available for both in person and online participants.

Focal point

Nathalie Khaled, Economic Affairs Officer, and Lead of the Economic Governance, Development Planning and Regulatory Modernization Workstream

Agenda

Day 1	Wednesday, 28 October 2026
8–9 a.m.	Welcome and registration
9–9.30 a.m. Opening session (live broadcast)	Opening remarks: • **Abdulla bin Touq al Marri,** Minister of Economy and Tourism, United Arab Emirates • **Rania Al-Mashat,** Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary, ESCWA (video recording) • **Pedro Manuel Moreno,** Acting Secretary-General, UNCTAD (video recording) • **Benoît Coeuré,** Chair of the Competition Committee, OECD (virtual participation) • **Willard Mwemba,** Director and Chief Executive Officer, COMESA Competition and Consumer Commission

Day 1	Wednesday, 28 October 2026
9.30–10.30 a.m. **Special session (live broadcast)**	**Arab young people in competition – University students** Participating universities in the United Arab Emirates have been invited to develop case studies on competition policy in the digital age, including topics such as competition dynamics in digital markets, fairness and equality of opportunity in the digital economy, the role of data and digital platforms in shaping market outcomes, challenges for businesses in digital environments, and the implications of digitalization for consumer welfare. This special celebratory session will feature the following: • Introduction to the challenge and its scoring system. • Presentations by the winning teams. • Announcement of the winners. • Award ceremony honoring the winners of the challenge.
10.30–11 a.m.	**Coffee break and group photo**
11 a.m.–12.30 p.m. **Session 1 (hybrid)**	**Session 1: Ex-ante regulation and competition in digital markets** The past decade has seen exponential growth of digital markets. As society becomes ever more interconnected, regulators are concerned about increases in market power and the growing influence of large digital platforms within and beyond the marketplace. At the same time, competition law enforcement is perceived as being less effective in addressing structural barriers that limit the ability of firms to compete in digital markets. This has spurred a debate about how and whether to regulate digital markets and proposals to intervene with ex ante regulation have multiplied.

Day 1	Wednesday, 28 October 2026
	The session will offer an opportunity to discuss: • The precise nature of the relationship between regulation and competition enforcement in digital markets. • The degree to which ex ante regulation and ex post enforcement are complementary rather than antagonistic. • The degree of convergence and divergence among the approaches taken in various jurisdictions to identify and regulate large digital platforms, as well as the reasons and potential shortcomings behind ex ante positive and negative obligations. • Policy and institutional considerations for the implementation of the ex-ante regulation at the international and regional levels. • Sectoral applications of ex-ante regulation in the Arab region: the case of food delivery markets. **Session coordinator: United Arab Emirates** **Moderator: Mohammed Sultan Janahi,** Director of Competition, Ministry of Economy and Tourism, United Arab Emirates **Speakers:** • **Diogo Thomson de Andrade,** President, Administrative Council for Economic Defense (CADE), Brazil • **Al-Anoud Al-Fahad,** Director of the Antitrust and Competition Investigations Department, and Acting Director of the Economic Affairs Department, Kuwait Competition Protection Agency, Kuwait • **Nathalie Khaled,** Economic Affairs Officer, and Lead of the Economic Governance, Development Planning and Regulatory Modernization Workstream, ESCWA

Day 1	Wednesday, 28 October 2026
	• **Camile Ammeloot,** Competition Lawyer and Case Officer, Digital Markets Act Team, Directorate-General for Competition, European Commission (virtual participation) **Developments in member States** **Open discussion**
12.30–1 p.m.	**Coffee break**
1–2.30 p.m. **Session 2 (hybrid)**	**Session 2: Building coherent digital competition policy through regional cooperation** The session will examine how regional cooperation can support coherent and effective digital competition policy across the Arab region. Participants will discuss recent regulatory developments, including assessments for digital-market provisions in competition laws, and explore how coordination, technical cooperation and knowledge-sharing can help address cross-border challenges in digital markets. The session will also consider practical modalities for aligning national approaches, while respecting differences in legal, institutional and developmental contexts. **The session will cover the following:** • Regulatory challenges and developments in the Arab region, including updates to the Arab Business Legislative Framework based on new indicators assessing digital-market provisions in competition laws. • Information exchange, peer learning and coordinated approaches to digital market issues, including the use of regional and international networks. • Enhancing policy coherence across countries with different legal, institutional and developmental contexts.

Day 1	Wednesday, 28 October 2026
	• Practical next steps for sustained regional cooperation, technical assistance, and structured knowledge-sharing on digital competition policy. **Session coordinator: ESCWA** • **Moderator: Tarik Alami,** Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme Support, and Director of the Governance and Conflict Prevention Cluster, ESCWA **Speakers:** • **Nathalie Khaled,** Economic Affairs Officer, and Lead of the Economic Governance, Development Planning and Regulatory Modernization Workstream, ESCWA • **Willard Mwemba,** Director and Chief Executive Officer, Competition and Consumer Commission, COMESA • **Noura Salem,** Officer in Charge of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) File, Arab Economic Integration Department, General Secretariat of the League of Arab States • **Teresa Moreira,** Competition Expert, former Head of the Competition and Consumer Policies Branch, UNCTAD (virtual participation) **Developments in member States** **Open discussion**
2.30–3.30 p.m.	**Lunch**

Day 2	Thursday, 29 October 2026
9–10.30 a.m. **Session 3 (hybrid)**	**Session 3: Merger control in the digital sector** Mergers in digital markets have been much discussed in recent years, following growing concerns around the acquisition strategies of major tech platforms. In parallel to the well-known debate on killer acquisitions and notification thresholds, call in powers or digital sovereignty, new questions have started to emerge on the suitability of existing theories of harm for an effective assessment of mergers in digital markets. Specific features of digital mergers, such as the prominent role of platform ecosystems relying on strong network effects, high-quality algorithms, economies of scale and data-driven economies of scope, may bring into question the ability of traditional theories of harm to reflect the real competitive harm that may result from a merger. **The session will cover the following:** • Extent to which merger policy in digital markets differs from merger policy in traditional markets. • Theories of harm currently used in the analysis of digital mergers and the challenges of traditional theories of harm when applied in digital markets. • Potential need for theories of harm that could better enable competition authorities to meet the standard of proof when assessing anticompetitive mergers. • Recent international and regional experiences to adapt merger control, reflecting the specific features of digital markets.

Day 2	Thursday, 29 October 2026
	Session coordinator: OECD **Moderator: Saïd Kechida,** Manager for Africa and the Middle East, Competition Division, OECD **Speakers:** • **Viktoria H.S.E. Robertson,** Professor of Competition Law and Digitalization, Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU) (virtual participation) • **Talal Al Hogail,** Senior Director of Mergers and Acquisitions, General Authority for Competition, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia • **Jamil Zaid,** Director General, Competition Protection Department, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply, Jordan • **Willard Mwemba,** Director and Chief Executive Officer, Competition and Consumer Commission, COMESA • **Christian Grobecker,** Case Officer, Directorate-General for Competition, European Commission (virtual participation) **Developments in member States** **Open discussion**
10.30–11 a.m.	**Coffee break**
11 a.m.–12.30 p.m. **Session 4 (hybrid)**	**Session 4: Institutional coordination between competition and consumer protection in the digital era** The session will examine how coordination between competition and consumer protection frameworks can enhance effective market functioning and consumer welfare, and why such coordination is particularly critical in digital contexts where competition and consumer protection issues increasingly intersect. It will explore how

Day 2	Thursday, 29 October 2026
	closer cooperation, institutional design and coordinated enforcement can help address cross-cutting challenges arising from digitalization, including platform markets, data-driven business models and algorithmic practices. **The session will cover the following:** • Rationale for strengthened coordination between competition and consumer protection authorities in digital markets. • Institutional design and governance models for managing overlapping mandates, including single- and dual-mandate authorities. • Role of institutional cooperation in addressing market concentration, data use, consumer trust, transparency and unfair digital practices. • Policy considerations for enhancing institutional synergies to support fair, transparent and well-functioning digital markets, drawing on regional and international experiences. **Session coordinator: UNCTAD** **Moderator: Akari Yamamoto-Bonenfant,** Legal Officer, Competition and Consumer Policies Branch, UNCTAD **Speakers:** • **Diogo Thomson de Andrade,** President, Administrative Council for Economic Defense (CADE), Brazil • **Irakli Lekvinadze,** Chairman, Georgian Competition and Consumer Agency (GCCA), Georgia • **Mohamad Cheikhrouho,** General Rapporteur, Tunisian Competition Council, Tunisia

Day 2	Thursday, 29 October 2026
	• **Ghada El-Wakil,** Director, Department for Combating Monopolistic Practices, Egyptian Competition Authority (ECA), Egypt • **Wang'ombe Kariuki,** Senior Consultant, Bowmans, and former Director-General, Competition Authority of Kenya, Kenya (virtual participation) **Developments in member States** **Open discussion**
12.30–1 p.m. **Closing Session**	**Way forward for fair and competitive digital markets in the Arab region** **Session coordinators: ESCWA and partners** • In this session, participants will present lessons learned and discuss key intervention areas to advance competition in the Arab region. • The session aims to reach consensus on concrete recommendations to enhance competition in the digital era.
1–2 p.m.	**Lunch**
Starting at 4 p.m.	**Cultural activity**