

_____ The ninth Annual Conference of Mediterranean Central Banks:

HARNESSING INNOVATION AND INTEGRATION FOR SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

1 October 2025, Cairo (Egypt)

The Conference of Mediterranean Central Banks is organised by the Central Bank of Egypt, the Banco de España, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

This is the ninth edition of a joint initiative that aims to foster a comprehensive dialogue on the economic and financial situation of the Mediterranean region from the perspective of the Governors of Central Banks of the Mediterranean region.

On this occasion, the first two sessions of the meeting will include exchanges between Governors of Central Banks on the implications of artificial intelligence development for the financial sector and for central banks, as well as the role of the financial sector on the green transition. The last two sessions will gather experts to debate on financial inclusion of women entrepreneurs and SMEs and on financial integration in the Mediterranean region.

PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 1 October 2025

8.30 - 9.00

Registration and Welcome Coffee

9.00 - 9.15

Group Photo

9.15 - 9.45

Introductory Remarks

Hassan Abdalla, Governor, Central Bank of Egypt

José Luís Escrivá, Governor, Banco de España

Meltem Büyükkarakaş, Deputy Secretary General, Union for the
Mediterranean (UfM).

Luiz de Mello, Director of the Country Studies Branch at the Economics
Department, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
(OECD)

Senén Florensa, Executive President, European Institute of the Mediterranean
(IEMed)

9.45 - 11.15

SESSION I. Artificial intelligence, central banks and the financial sector

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly transforming the banking and financial sectors, offering powerful tools and new capabilities for higher productivity, decision-making, consumer protection, and financial inclusion—particularly in low- and middle-income countries. As a general-purpose technology, AI presents both significant opportunities and serious risks. Central banks have a key role to play in fostering innovation while ensuring financial stability and responsible AI use. This session will explore how central banks can harness AI's potential, address emerging challenges, and collaborate to build resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking financial systems. It will discuss the transformational role of AI for Central Banks, key elements for scaling up the use of AI while dealing with risks, and how to retain AI talent, share experience and foster cooperation among Central Banks in the region.

Moderator

José Luís Escrivá, Governor, Banco de España

Panellists

Edward Scicluna, Governor, Central Bank of Malta

Michael Faulend, Vice-Governor, Croatian National Bank

Mehmet Zahit Ateş, Executive Director of Information Technologies
Department, Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye

11.15 - 11.30	Coffee Break
11.30 - 11.45	Special Intervention by HE Angelina Eichhorst, EU Ambassador to Egypt and the League of Arab States
11.45 - 13.15	<p>SESSION II. Financing for sustainable development</p> <p>The green transition has become a global policy priority, demanding massive financial resources to support climate goals and the energy transition. Against the backdrop of stretched public finance, mobilising capital is a major challenge for policymakers that requires multi-stakeholders' collaboration. The challenges vary between the right incentives for the private sector to join the transition, assess the potential transition costs, channel large public resources (internal and external) efficiently and simultaneously achieving the nationally determined contributions (NDCs). This session will explore how to bridge the climate finance gap, the role of multilateral development banks, the importance of country-led platforms, and strategies to overcome barriers to scale up co-financing and private sector engagement.</p> <p>Moderator</p> <p>Hassan Abdalla, Governor, Central Bank of Egypt</p> <p>Panellists</p> <p>Fethi Zouhair Nouri, Governor, Central Bank of Tunisia</p> <p>Primož Dolenc, Acting Governor, Bank of Slovenia</p> <p>Abderrahim Bouazza, Deputy Governor Bank Al-Magrib</p> <p>Marie-Hélène Ferrer, Deputy Director for Economics and International Cooperation, Banque de France</p>
13.30 - 14.30	Lunch
14.30 - 15.45	<p>SESSION III. Financial inclusion for all</p> <p>Financial inclusion is a key driver of economic empowerment and social equity, yet important economic actors such as women entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) remain significantly underserved. For SMEs, limited access to credit, financial services, and formal banking institutions constrain their growth and investment potential. Informality in the economy further exacerbates these challenges, making it harder for businesses to secure financing and benefit from regulatory support. As regards women and underserved groups, they face systemic barriers in accessing financial services due to discriminatory social norms, lack of collateral, and legal constraints. In 2017, the World Bank reported a \$22 billion SME finance gap for</p>

women-owned enterprises in the MENA region, representing 16% of the total finance gap. This session will discuss ways to contribute to closing the inclusion gap, including innovative and inclusive banking and financial solutions, gender-sensitive regulatory and policy frameworks, targeted literacy initiatives for women, youth and people with disabilities, as well as strategies to increase access to finance for informal enterprises.

Keynote speech by

Maya Morsy, Minister of Social Solidarity, Government of Egypt

Moderator

Roger Albinyana, Managing Director, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed)

Panellists

Antonio Gomes, Deputy Director for Financial and Enterprise Affairs, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Mohammed El Idrissi, Head of the Sectoral Financing and Financial Inclusion Division, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Morocco

Rym Ayadi, Founder and President, Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA)

Essma Ben Hamida, Co-founder, Enda Tamweel, Tunisia

15.45 - 16.05

Coffee Break

16.00 - 17.15

SESSION IV. Financial Integration

Economic integration in the Mediterranean holds strong potential to drive inclusive growth, resilience, and sustainability. To maximise its impact, integration should encompass trade, finance, movement of people and ideas, all of which supported by suitable connectivity infrastructure. The 2025 OECD progress report on Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean observes that limited progress was achieved in several countries of the region in establishing a consistent regulatory framework that can support the development of domestic financial markets and create the conditions for financial integration in the region. This session will discuss which reforms would most effectively reduce regulatory fragmentation across the Mediterranean and how can governments, central banks and the private sector work together to improve digital infrastructure for improved access to finance. It will also aim at identifying risk-sharing mechanisms and policy tools to facilitate investment in connectivity infrastructure while exploring financial services that help SMEs integrate into regional and global value chains.

Keynote speech by

Hala Elsaid, Economic Advisor to H.E the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Former Minister of Planning and Economic Development.

Moderator

Luiz de Mello, Director of the Country Studies Branch at the Economics Department, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Panellists

Carlos Conde, Head of Middle East and Africa Division, Global Relations and Cooperation Directorate, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

Ahmed Kamaly, Macro Economist and former Deputy Minister at Ministry of Planning & Economic Development, Egypt

Cumhur Coşkun Küçüközmen, Professor of International Trade & Sustainable Finance, Izmir University of Economics.

17.15 - 17.30

Closing Remarks

Hassan Abdalla, Governor, Central Bank of Egypt

José Luís Escrivá, Governor, Banco de España

19.30 - 22.30

Grand Egyptian Museum Tour and Dinner