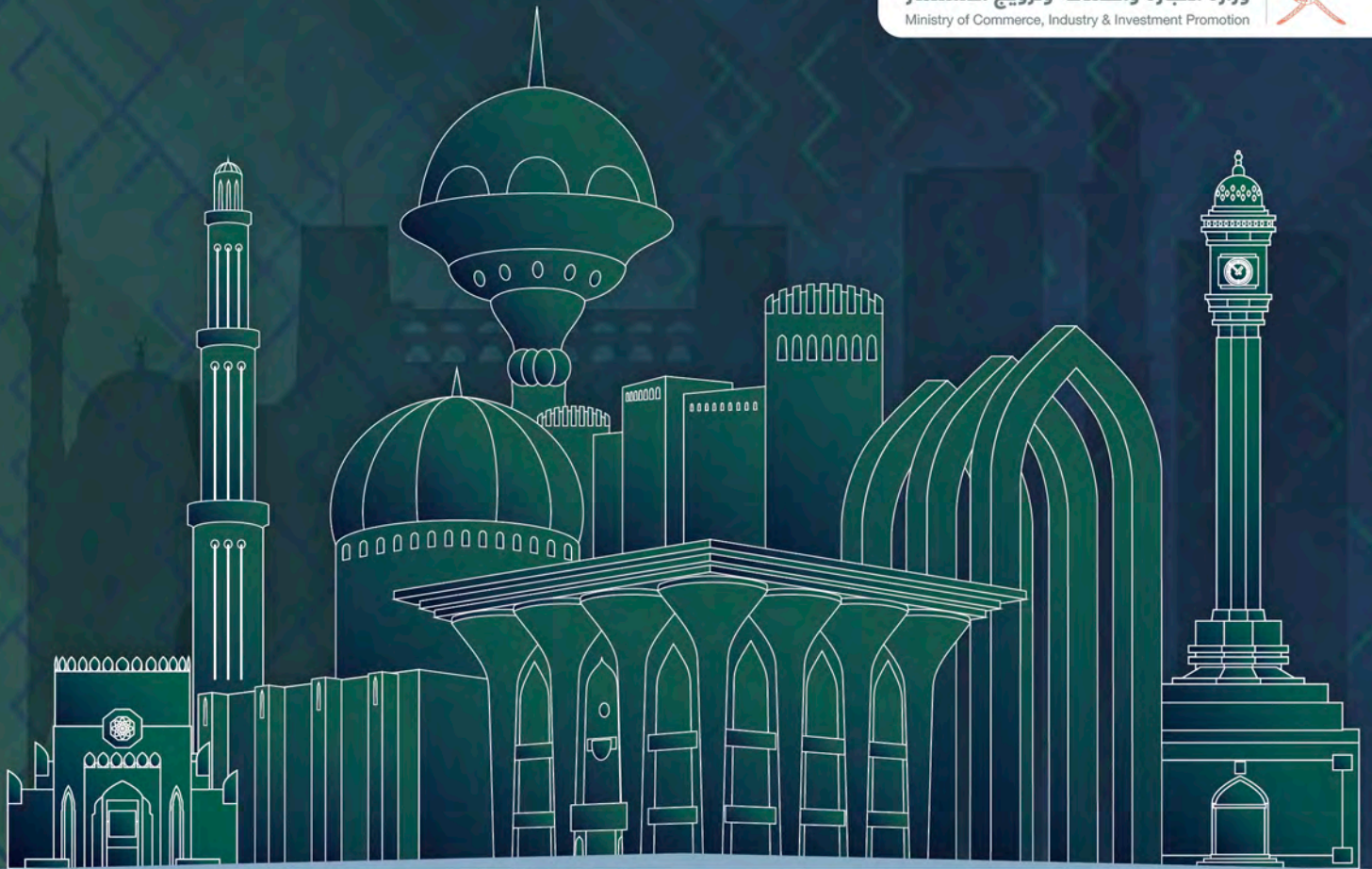


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Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion



10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition

# OMAN 2024

Economy | Green Economy & Sustainability | Finance | Energy | Industry | Digital Transformation  
Transport | Construction & Real Estate | Agribusiness | Tourism | Education



Image: Patrik Djurich

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## Oman 2024

**T**his 2024 edition marks a momentous occasion—The Business Year has spent a decade chronicling Oman's remarkable socio-economic transformation. 10 years ago, we first embarked on a journey to document the Sultanate's evolving business landscape, and this publication serves as a testament to the incredible strides the country has made.

The edition, once again produced in partnership with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, features over 100 interviews with leading business and government figures that paint a vivid picture of a nation at a pivotal juncture, poised to embrace a future defined by digital transformation and environmental sustainability.

These themes are not mere buzzwords, but rather a strategic focus at the core of Oman's development. The nation's ambitious green agenda has captured global attention, with the recent announcement of plans to become the world's hydrogen capital a prime example. As Al Abdulsalam Al Murshidi, President of the Oman Investment Authority, aptly stated, "Green hydrogen is presently first on our agenda." This strategic focus has even sparked healthy skepticism, pushing Oman to refine its approach and solidify its position as a leader in this nascent industry.

Qais Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, echoes this optimism. "This Omani green hydrogen we export will make a substantial contribution to the efforts of countries around the world to reduce their emissions and fight climate change."

Digitalization, the other pillar of Oman's transformation, is permeating all sectors. Said Al Mandhari, CEO of ITHCA Group, emphasized the crucial role of ICT in identifying gaps and fostering growth. This focus on digital infrastructure and adoption aligns perfectly with the government's divestment program, spearheaded by the Oman Investment Authority. By strategically allocating resources, Oman is laying the groundwork for a di-

versified and future-proof economy.

Beyond the boardrooms and government offices, the spirit of innovation is palpable. Mazin Al Lamki, President of Energy Development Oman (EDO), highlighted the role of the organization in unlocking growth opportunities in Oman's energy sector. This focus on maximizing efficiency and harnessing new resources aligns perfectly with Oman's broader green ambitions.

Our conversations, however, extended far beyond these headline themes. The unwavering optimism of the Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry regarding the continued growth of the non-oil sector, bolstered by favorable oil prices and a robust banking system, paints a picture of a multifaceted economy on the rise.

The country has also seen a credit rating upgrade and a significant rise in foreign direct investment (FDI). Al Yousef states: "We have been ranked as the fourth most-attractive country for foreign direct investment in 2023 in the FDI Standouts Watchlist."

As Oman strives to become a leading investment destination, its political stability and business-friendly policies offer a compelling narrative to potential investors across all sectors. This includes the tourism industry, which is poised for a significant comeback driven by the country's unparalleled landscape, culture, and biodiversity conservation efforts. Shabib Al Maamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman, beautifully captured Oman's approach to tourism development with the statement: "There's no fear of losing authenticity; it's deeply ingrained in the country's DNA..." This unwavering commitment to preserving cultural heritage while offering unique experiences positions Oman as a truly special destination.

The interviews featured in this publication offer a glimpse into a nation brimming with potential. We invite you to delve into these conversations and discover the stories shaping Oman's exciting future. ✘

*This publication has been produced by The Business Year International's expert cadre of journalists, writers, editors, and designers. The content contained within is original and was compiled by our team on the ground.*

Regional Director Ioana Popa | Country Director Silvia Lambiase  
Country Editor Benjamin Reyes | Project Assistant Sundes Biderkab

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Today, Oman LNG stands resilient to deliver reliable energy worldwide and sustain Oman's position in the global LNG trade.



**GDP PER CAPITA (2022)**

SOURCE: THE WORLD BANK

USD25,056

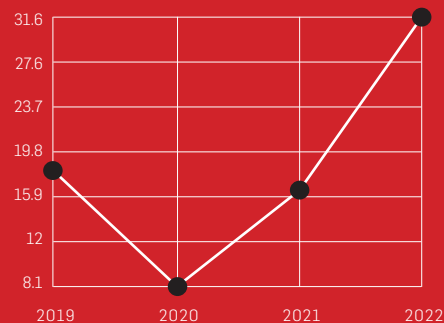
**INFLATION (2022)**

SOURCE: THE WORLD BANK

2.8%

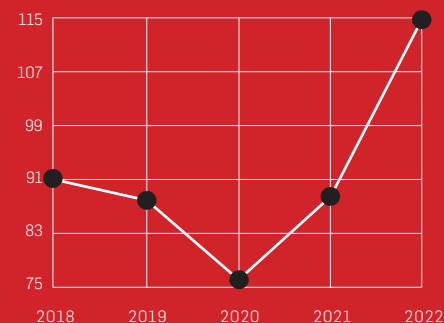
**MERCHANDISE TRADE BALANCE (US\$ BN)**

SOURCE: SOURCE: FOCUS ECONOMICS



**GDP (IN USD BILLIONS)**

SOURCE: THE WORLD BANK



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Oman is busy building an economy that will weather the winds of change, focusing on sustainability and digitalization.*

Oman navigates 2024 firmly anchored to the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040 and the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan. The nation is committed to a growth trajectory of at least 3% GDP, balanced by efforts to maintain moderate inflation. The 2024 budget reflects this commitment, meticulously designed to promote financial, economic, and social stability, fostering economic expansion, controlling inflation, and invigorating the investment landscape. The budget showcases an optimistic balance between oil and gas revenues (68%) and non-oil revenues (32%), highlighting Oman's agility in responding to global trends. Sustainability and development are prioritized through increased social protection and impactful development projects, demonstrating Oman's resilience and strategic planning. Economic diversification efforts, particularly in renewable energy and tourism, are ambitious. A USD5.2 billion Future Fund stimulates investment, while large-scale agreements for green hydrogen and biofuels solidify Oman's intent to increase renewable energy's contribution to 30% by 2030.

**GREEN TRANSITION: A CORNERSTONE FOR THE FUTURE**

The transformation of Oman's economic landscape is driven by a national commitment to sustainability. The Oman Environment Authority spearheads environmental awareness by integrating sustainability education into schools and universities. Public-private partnerships propel Oman toward a greener future. The Oman LNG Development Foundation exemplifies this collaboration, tackling environmental preservation alongside social initiatives. The Oman Hydrogen Centre plays a pivotal role in research and development, positioning Oman as a hydrogen frontrunner in the MENA region. The business scene is following suit. Government-backed logistics company Asyad Group integrates ESG factors into its strategy, while Gulf Torch Oman capitalizes on green opportunities in CO2 recovery and hydrogen solutions. Innovative companies like 44.01 utilize Oman's abundant peridotite rock to permanently remove CO2 from the atmosphere. Large-scale renewable energy projects with hydrogen production, like Hyport Duqm, are being predominantly spearheaded by state-backed company Hydrom.

### FINANCIAL INNOVATION AND RESILIENCE

Oman's financial sector demonstrates exceptional adaptability and innovation. The focus for 2024 is on harnessing technology, refining regulatory frameworks, and promoting inclusive growth. The insurance sector shows significant progress with the integration of AI and a strategic push toward financial inclusivity through innovative products. The banking sector exhibits remarkable adaptability, maintaining stability amid interest rate fluctuations and global economic pressures. The embrace of digital transformation through AI, blockchain, and fintech solutions has streamlined operations and opened new avenues for customer engagement and profitability. Bank Nizwa's focus on sustainability, innovation, and Islamic finance underscores the industry trend towards integrating ESG principles. Bank Muscat's achievements reflect the strength and strategic acumen of Oman's largest banking entity.

### ENERGY: A BALANCED APPROACH

Despite the renewables focus, the traditional energy sector remains vital for Oman, contributing significantly to national GDP and playing a key role in economic diversification. In the realm of traditional energy, Oman continues to enhance infrastructure to support increased production and export needs. The recent expansion by Oman LNG and the IPO by gas company OQGN, the Sultanate's largest IPO to date, underscore the robust confidence in Oman's energy market. This capital infusion is earmarked for further infrastructure enhancements and pioneering projects in hydrogen and carbon capture utilization.

### INDUSTRY: A PILLAR OF DIVERSIFICATION

Oman's industrial sector remains a cornerstone of its diversification strategy outlined in Oman Vision 2040. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion is at the forefront of this transformation, introducing legislative updates, enhancing industrial facilities, and supporting local factories. A focus on Industry 4.0 solutions, including factory automation and artificial intelligence, aims to boost production efficiency, enhance product competitiveness, and adhere to global best practices. Manufacturing industries are already showing positive results, contributing 9.3% to GDP by the end of September 2023.

### DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: POWERING PROGRESS

Oman is embracing digital transformation through a collaborative effort between government and private entities. Robust infrastructure is the foundation, with Oman Tower Company building towers equipped for future technologies like 5G. Leading operators like Omantel and Vodafone are driving innovation through partnerships and a focus on customer experience. Bridging the digital divide is a priority, with Oman Broadband Company employing innovative solutions to connect remote areas. Specialization fuels growth, with companies like Tadoom leading in smart city development and OSOS offering advanced business solutions.

### OMAN'S TOURISM INDUSTRY: UNVEILING A HIDDEN GEM

Oman is seeking to capitalize on its natural beauty and cultural heritage. Despite boasting stunning white-sand beaches, crystal-clear waters, majestic mountains, and captivating deserts, Oman remains a relatively undiscovered destination. This is set to change. Strategic investments and a forward-thinking approach are propelling Oman's tourism industry towards becoming a significant contributor to the nation's diversification goals, as envisioned in Oman Vision 2040. The country is prioritizing quality tourism development, particularly adventure tourism, and sustainable practices to ensure long-term success. Oman's sponsorship earlier this year of ITB Berlin, the world's leading travel trade fair, signifies a global marketing push to attract more tourists. ✖



**OCTOBER  
2023**  
OQGN closes highly successful IPO, the largest in the history of the Sultanate



**NOVEMBER  
2023**  
Oman Investment Authority announces completion of USD10.4 billion of national mega projects, including Duqm Refinery



**DECEMBER  
2023**  
Oman and India sign multiple MoUs to deepen economic relations



**JANUARY  
2024**  
Oman Investment Authority launches USD5.2bn fund to increase investments in SMEs



**FEBRUARY  
2024**  
Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion launch "Partnership and Integration" program to empower private sector



**MARCH  
2024**  
Oman opens world's largest tourism trade fair ITB Berlin as host country



**APRIL  
2024**  
Actis and Fortescue consortium are awarded rights to develop Green Hydrogen Project in Oman



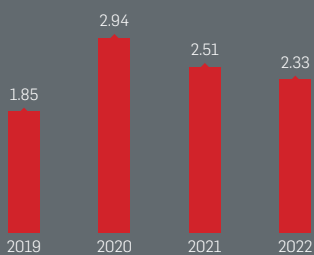
**MAY  
2024**  
Oman hosts talks between the US and Iran to de-escalate regional tensions



## Traffic pictured on a main road in Muscat

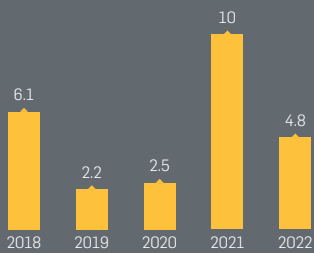
### UNEMPLOYMENT (%)

SOURCE: MACRO TRENDS



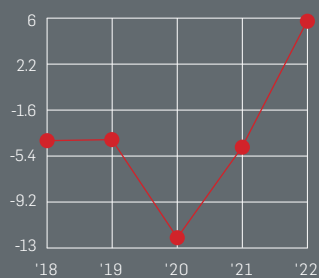
### FDI, NET INFLOWS (% OF GDP)

SOURCE: THE WORLD BANK



### CURRENT ACCOUNT BALANCE (BOP, CURRENT USD BN)

SOURCE: THE WORLD BANK



# Economy

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## EYE ON THE FUTURE

**A**s Oman navigates through 2024, its economic strategy is firmly anchored in the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040 and the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025). The nation is committed to a growth trajectory aiming for at least a 3% increase in GDP, balanced by efforts to maintain inflation at moderate levels. Reflecting this commitment, the 2024 budget is meticulously designed to promote financial, economic, and social stability, with a clear focus on fostering economic expansion, controlling inflation, and invigorating the investment landscape.

Oman's forward-looking budget for 2024 showcases an optimistic balance between oil and gas revenues (68%) and a growing focus on non-oil revenues (32%), highlighting the nation's agile response to global economic trends. With an eye on sustainability and development, the budget prioritizes increases in social protection and impactful development projects, demonstrating Oman's resilience and strategic planning in face of global challenges such as geopolitical tensions and oil price volatility.

Oman's economic diversification efforts are notably ambitious, especially in renewable energy and tourism, supported by a USD5.2-billion Future Fund aimed at stimulating investment. Large-scale agreements to develop green hydrogen and biofuels highlight Oman's strategic intent to increase renewable energy's contribution to 30% by 2030, paving the way for sustainable economic growth beyond its traditional sectors.

Oman is projecting a budget shortfall of OMR640 million (USD1.66 billion) for 2024, transitioning from the fiscal surplus recorded in the previous year. This anticipated deficit, representing roughly 1.5% of Oman's GDP, stems from decreased oil production and lower market prices. Despite this, the fiscal outlook for 2024 is imbued

with optimism for a possible surplus, should oil prices swing favorably. Oman's commendable track record of reducing public debt and achieving fiscal surpluses highlights effective economic management, signaling a continued journey toward fiscal sustainability and enduring economic vitality.

Underpinning these efforts, Oman's strategic initiatives and investments, including the Oman Investment Authority's focus on diversifying the economy through tourism and green hydrogen, position the country as a burgeoning leader in the global green energy sector. The establishment of economic zones and the push for global partnerships in renewable energy investments underscore Oman's competitive edge and strategic vision for economic diversification.

Echoing this sentiment, Sheikh Faisal bin Abdullah Al-Rawas, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, highlighted the wide array of investment opportunities across various sectors, emphasizing the importance of international trade, digital transformation, and enhanced economic competitiveness. Oman's strategic focus on sectors like manufacturing, tourism, mining, and logistics, alongside efforts to bolster the business environment and streamline procedures, illustrates a holistic approach to achieving economic diversification and growth.

As Oman strides forward with Oman Vision 2040, the collective optimism from government officials, strategic investments, and development initiatives paints a promising picture of economic resilience and growth. The focus on green energy, economic diversification, and international cooperation positions Oman as a dynamic player on the global stage, ready to embrace the opportunities and challenges of the future. ✖

## INTERVIEW



## PAVING *the way*

MoCIIP has continued to simplify procedures through initiatives like Invest Easy and the Invest Oman Lounge to better attract international investors.

### BIO

*Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef was appointed Minister of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion in 2020. Additionally, he serves as Chairman of the SME Development Authority. Prior to assuming the role of minister, he was Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce Industry and CEO of the Al Yousef Group. While heading the chamber, he served as deputy chairman of the Public Authority of Manpower Register and sat on a number of boards and committees, notably the Research Council, Oman Vision 2040 Steering Committee, Consultancy Board for the GCC Supreme Council, and the Public Authority for Charitable Organizations. Earlier in his career, Al Yousef spent over 20 years in a variety of senior executive roles in the private sector with interests in oil and gas services, industry, logistics, insurance and financial services. He holds an MBA from the Stanford Graduate School of Business, Stanford University, and a BA in economics from Williams College.*

Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef  
MINISTER OF COMMERCE,  
INDUSTRY & INVESTMENT  
PROMOTION

**What initiatives is the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) taking to simplify procedures in order to encourage foreign investment?**

MoCIIP is proud to have played a part in helping create the dynamic economic environment that has led to resounding international endorsements as, under the wise leadership and guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, we take inspiration from the rich possibilities of Oman Vision 2040. Through the framework provided by this ambitious blueprint for growth and development, the ministry has reengineered its approach to business and created a more enabling infrastructure for investment. As part of this, we have been streamlining services with pro-enterprise initiatives such as Invest Easy, the government portal where licenses and approvals can be obtained for more than 1,500 economic activities from 18 leading authorities, all in one transaction. In this regard, since its launch in April 2021, over 421,000 licenses have been issued—77,757 of them to international investors, a YoY rise of nearly 60%. The latest example of our enterprise-driven approach to business is the Invest Oman Lounge opened in February 2023. Located adjacent to Muscat International Airport so visitors can avail of its resources immediately on arrival, the lounge has been developed to fast-track the business set-up journey by facilitating connections with all the help and tools needed to make investment decisions. The activities of the Lounge complement those of Nazdaher, the National Program for Investment & Export Development, which since March 2021 has been working to attract investment in major projects across the country.

**What will be the importance of trade and export-oriented industries in Oman's diversification agenda in the near future?**

Currently, we are negotiating FTAs with China, South Korea, Pakistan, and New Zealand. We are also in talks with the UK as part of a GCC-wide agreement. The UK-GCC FTA alone is expected to boost trade by 16%. These will join our current portfolio of FTAs that includes the US and Singapore, amongst others. There is no doubt that Oman's new and emerging industries will play a significant part in our future exports. In particular, Oman's green

***“The ministry has reengineered its approach to business and created a more open infrastructure for investment.”***

hydrogen industry targets the production of at least 1 million tons a year by 2030 and up to 8.5 million tons by 2050. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), Oman will be the largest exporter of green hydrogen in the Middle East by 2030 and the sixth largest globally. Indeed, we are already seeing investment from major manufacturers keen to capitalize on this important renewable. The ministry is working hard to lay the groundwork to support the immense possibilities of our established and emerging manufacturers, making sure everything is in place for them to trade with the world.

**Can you elaborate on regulations committed to the 2050 net-zero emissions goal?**

Oman has been blessed with an abundance of solar, wind, and land. These form the pillars of one of our most important new industries, the green energy industry, which, through projects such as the Ibri II solar PV power plant and the award-winning Harweel Wind Farm, is already shining brightly in our investment landscape, attracting high-caliber international partners and investors. Recognizing the global importance of this new industry, a strong ecosystem of initiatives has been put in place. One example of this is Hydrom, the new national energy company set up to help champion our energy transition. Another example is Hy-Fly—a national alliance of 15 major public and private institutions created in August last year to facilitate the local production, transportation, utilization, and export of green hydrogen. Environmental concerns and the opportunities of the green economy are inspiring many young Omani entrepreneurs. These include Mays EV, Oman's first electric vehicle design and manufacturing company; and carbon-capture start-up 44.01, winners of the Earthshot Prize and the Musk Foundation's XPRIZE. ✖

# AMBITIOUS *strategy*

Abdulsalam Al Murshidi  
PRESIDENT,  
OMAN INVESTMENT AUTHORITY (OIA)



The public and private sectors are working hard to meet green targets and promote sustainable practices and alternative energies.

**What factors make hydrogen and alternative energy in Oman ripe for investment?**

The Omani government, including the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and OIA, has set an ambitious strategy for this goal. Indeed, Oman has already begun the journey of transition through solar and wind projects for the grid, with around 1.7GW already installed. Oman is now also working with international partners to kickstart the green hydrogen industry and leverage its natural renewable resources. Hydrom, the government's hydrogen development company, has already awarded six blocks to developers amounting to close to 1 MMT-PA of GH<sub>2</sub> production. OIA and its companies are also working on projects across the H<sub>2</sub> industry value chain, such as electrolyzers, storage, and shipping. The aim is to localize the technologies and industries needed to produce, store, utilize, and export hydrogen.

**How is Oman performing against its green energy targets?**

The country has set up a net zero roadmap drafted out by the Environment Authority and key sector entities in 2022 in alignment with the Paris Climate Accords. The targeted sectors include electricity, real estate, construction, transport, industry, and oil and gas. The decarbonization efforts include short-term initiatives such as efficiency projects; medium-term projects such as renewable projects for utilities and oil and gas, green mobility, and green hydrogen developments; and long-term projects currently being evaluated, such as carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS), CO<sub>2</sub> export, and nature-based carbon capture solutions. Oman continues to be active in the discussion on the global stage and is looking at an orderly transition to reach net zero by 2050. Its current emissions level is around 105 MTCO<sub>2</sub>/annum, and the priority is to cut emissions by 50%; however, further initiatives are needed to reach lower levels to address more challenging sectors such as oil and gas.

**What progress has been made on your divestment strategy, and what will it mean for the country's investment climate?**

There has been significant progress. This program is not just about selling assets but about strategic and optimal resource allocation, which will help

reshape the national economic landscape. We have achieved key milestones in our divestment process particularly in energy, logistics, and infrastructure, with three successful IPOs (Pearl REIF, Abraj, and OQGN) and direct sales. By transitioning these assets to the public through IPOs, there has been an infusion of fresh capital and a diversification of investment portfolios. This not only increases liquidity in the market but also democratizes ownership, allowing a wider section of the populace to partake in the nation's economic growth.

**In which regions do you intend to grow your investments?**

OIA consistently invests globally, both in public and private markets, focusing on North America, Europe, and Asia through its Future Generation Fund (FGF). Growth and diversification are paramount in expanding the fund. In private markets, OIA invests in funds and direct opportunities. Over the past 30 years, fund investments have grown, directing capital to top-tier managers in approximately 50% of North America and the rest in Europe, Asia, and other regions for buyouts, growth, venture capital, infrastructure, and real estate. Public market investments are diversified globally, and the portfolio will maintain its global footprint. Additionally, the fund strategically directs investments into global direct deals that align with Oman Vision 2040, targeting sectors like energy transition, logistics, healthcare, mining, and more. OIA also structures joint ventures to forge partnerships with governments and corporations, driving capital growth and establishing strategic alliances.

**What message would you send to the global investor community about doing business in Oman?**

I have one simple message: Oman is open for business 24/7; one just needs to knock on the door and visit us to find out. As for our economic outlook, I am extremely positive. The rating adjustment every six months by rating agencies reflects the developments taking place. His Majesty Sultan Haitham makes state visits to other countries to promote investment and economic collaboration. Economic relationships are always prioritized, in addition to clear directives to our embassies abroad to act as or to activate what we call economic diplomacy. We want them to ultimately promote Oman as an investment destination. ✖

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***Tourism and hydrogen are the most attractive sectors for investment***

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***Divestment is a pivotal step toward an enhanced economic climate***

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#### BIO

*In addition to being President of OIA, Abdulsalam Al Murshidi is a board member of the Gulf Investment Corporation and represents the Sultanate on the board of governors of the Asian Investment Infrastructure Bank (AIIB). He previously held other positions and founded various industrial, commercial, and investment companies in the region. Al Murshidi graduated with distinction from the University of Aberdeen in the UK with a master's of science in petroleum geology. He also holds a bachelor of science degree in geophysics from the University of Arizona in the US.*

# WALKING *new paths*



Ammar Al Kharousi  
CEO,  
INVEST OMAN

In the past year, Invest OMAN has successfully enhanced Oman's investment environment, driving the nation's economic diversification and sustainable development efforts.

## BIO

Ammar Al Kharousi stands at the forefront of Oman's investment landscape as the CEO of Invest OMAN and the Director General of the Investment Services Center at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion. His career includes roles such as deputy chairman at Muscat Bay, head of development at OMRAN, and development director at Yiti Tourism Development Company.

**Invest OMAN is over a year old. What strides have been made since setting up the initiative?**

Since its establishment over a year ago, Invest OMAN has rapidly positioned itself at the forefront of Oman's investment promotion efforts, embodying the nation's commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment that appeals to global investors. Our role as the official gateway to major investments in strategic sectors cannot be overstated; we streamline the investor journey, offering comprehensive services that transform visionary ideas into viable projects. Our mission is central to the country's strategy to diversify its economy, attracting investments in promising sectors through a suite of enticing benefits. These include up to 100% foreign ownership, investor residence for up to 10 years, tax exemptions for up to thirty years, competitive land and service prices, and customs duty exemptions. In the brief period since its inception, Invest OMAN has made noteworthy progress, notably enhancing the efficiency of the investment facilitation process. We have seen several promising projects commence, laying the groundwork for future growth within Oman's dynamic business landscape.

**Does Invest OMAN have a mandate to promote investments in any areas in particular?**

Invest OMAN plays a pivotal role in the national strategy to foster investment within specific high-growth sectors, as identified in the country's far-reaching Vision 2040. This strategic roadmap pinpoints logistics, food security, tourism, mining, renewable clean energy, emerging technologies, and manufacturing as sectors with significant growth potential and where Oman possesses a distinct competitive advantage. These priority areas are further bolstered by supportive sectors such as education, healthcare, and the principles of a circular economy, all integral to ensuring a holistic and sustainable economic expansion. Invest OMAN is tasked with promoting these sectors through a series of appealing incentives, underpinned by a framework of accommodating laws and regulations. These incentives are designed to attract and nurture investments, facilitating an environment where businesses can thrive.

**What will Oman need to focus on to be competitive in this race and be a preferred investment**

**destination in the Middle East?**

Oman's strategy for standing out in the global race to attract investments is multifaceted, emphasizing stability, talent, infrastructure, business environment, and strategic location in the face of the global economic slowdown and fluctuating interest rates. The country's stable economic rankings, as assessed by leading agencies such as Fitch Ratings, Moody's, and Standard & Poor's, provide a robust platform that fosters investor confidence. A BB+ rating from Fitch, Ba1 from Moody's, and BB+ from S&P affirm the nation's creditworthiness and macroeconomic stability—a critical factor for investors, especially in uncertain economic times. An essential element of Oman's appeal is its focus on nurturing a skilled workforce and talent pool ready to engage with emerging industries. This forward-thinking approach to human capital not only positions Oman as a hub of expertise but also aligns with the demands of a knowledge-based economy. To maintain its competitive edge, Oman must continue to build upon these strengths. Prioritizing continuous improvements in ease of doing business, reinforcing the legal framework to protect investments, and promoting sectors where Oman has a comparative advantage or emerging potential will be key. In addition, embracing sustainability and innovation can cater to the growing global emphasis on responsible investment.

**What is your outlook for Oman's investment climate in 2024, and what are your targets for the year?**

Oman's investment climate in 2024 is poised to capitalize on the nation's robust economic fundamentals and the momentum generated by our strategic initiatives to diversify the economy. We anticipate an environment that is conducive to growth and reassuring for investors looking for reliable and upward-trending markets. Our targets for Invest Oman in 2024 are ambitious yet achievable. We aim to continue expanding the scope and scale of foreign investment. With an emphasis on trending sectors that align with global economic shifts, such as renewable energy, technology, and sustainable tourism, we plan to further augment the industrial and free zones that have been pivotal in attracting investments thus far. ✖

# DESTINATION *of choice*

OPAZ leverages a comprehensive approach to attract international investors by offering generous incentives, strategic location benefits, and streamlined investor services across its 14 special economic zones.

Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy  
CHAIRMAN,  
PUBLIC AUTHORITY FOR SPECIAL ECONOMIC  
ZONES & FREE ZONES (OPAZ)



**To compete effectively in the global marketplace for foreign investment, what key elements does OPAZ leverage to attract international investors?**

Since its establishment in 2020, OPAZ has been dedicated to providing all necessary support for investors to create an optimal investment environment, and aligning with its vision to make the zones under its supervision the best destination of choice. Today, investors have a choice to be based in any of the 14 special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities under OPAZ with a huge land bank of nearly 2,300sqkm spread across the Sultanate of Oman. Generous incentives are available by law depending on the nature of the zone. Sohar, Salalah, and Duqm are coupled with state-of-the-art ports while Al-Mazyunah and Khazaen have dry ports to facilitate international shipping. Almost all zones are in close proximity to international or local airports, connected to the national power grid and the main gas pipeline. Eight more zones are under development or design. OPAZ has focused on identifying the value proposition and relative advantages of each region to facilitate investor decision-making based on their desired projects and the available benefits in each zone. Simultaneously, various clusters have emerged in these zones such as renewable energy, green industries, pharmaceuticals, petrochemicals, and car manufacturing and assembly. OPAZ has also worked on streamlining the investor journey by activating a

single one-stop shop backed up by advanced digital platforms.

**Since OPAZ operates the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), how do you contribute to building an infrastructure that encourages investment in the zone?**

SEZAD is a massive 2,000-sqkm investment zone, offering a diversified environment for all businesses. This zone caters to industries, commerce, tourism, real estate development, and logistics, attracting investors from across the globe. The government has already invested OMR2.5 billion in infrastructure, to build Duqm Airport, the Port of Duqm, the Fishery Port, a high-standard road network, surface water drainage systems and other utilities. In 2023, SEZAD completed and handed over four cutting-edge container cranes, further enhancing the Port of Duqm capabilities. These technologically advanced cranes boast high speed, smart handling, and remote-control features. Internal connectivity is well planned. A network of single and dual carriageway roads links different investment zones with Duqm. Additionally, a new dual carriageway is under construction, connecting the city center to the Ras Markaz crude oil storage area, roughly 80km away. Now, the focus is on making SEZAD greener by planting thousands of trees and expanding green areas. Also, a tender was floated to design and build vibrant recreational districts to improve the quality of life, and we will see investment in more green areas, internal

roads, and other facilities.

**Oman has established a goal to become carbon neutral by 2050. What part do you play in the growth of this sector?**

OPAZ is a key partner in Oman's green energy initiatives. In 2022 and 2023, two deals were signed at Duqm with international green hydrogen producers, one of which has started mobilization on site. Two more deals were signed with green steel and low-carbon steel producers, and one has started construction. One more iron steel manufacturer is undergoing detailed discussions for site identification and gas allocation. Additionally, SEZAD is conducting feasibility studies and planning energy transfer corridors to accommodate for other green hydrogen projects outside and inside the zone so that they can export their products either from the port of Duqm facilities or other sea site locations in the zone. This is to ensure optimal utilization and avoid overlap with existing projects. There will be great new opportunities created by these megaprojects. We invite international companies to invest in downstream projects as well as the production of windmills and solar panels to cater for these great opportunities in the supply chain. There will be similar opportunities related to green energy and green products in other areas like Salalah Free Zone, Sohar Free Zone, and Thumrait Industrial City (under development). ✖

EVENT  
The Oman Business Forum

# LATEST EVENT EXPLORES *Oman's sustainable and digital future*

*The Oman business community's top minds gathered for insightful discussion on the future of the local economy.*



As part of our commitment to catalyze meaningful dialogue on topics of national interest and to serve as a platform for networking and knowledge exchange, on May 20, 2024, The Business Year hosted the Oman Business Forum at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat. The event was held in partnership with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), and it gathered Oman's most prominent executives, government officials, and industry experts for a day of thought leadership, engaging panel discussions, and strategic networking. The event also served as an opportunity for The Business Year to launch this publication.

The forum perfectly coincided with a pivotal moment for Oman. With the recent removal of minimum capital requirements for investment, the Sultanate is sending a clear message to the world: it's open for business. The event delved into the key issues shaping the nation's economic future, focusing on topics such as: how digitalization is revolutionizing key sectors like banking, transport, and energy; the latest developments in renewable energy and the future of the extractive industries; how Oman is prioritizing ESG principles to achieve balanced growth; and how Oman is attracting new investments, particularly in the above areas, and fostering a conducive business environment.

HE Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, delivered the keynote speech, during which he shared his vision for Oman's economic future. Regarding the launch of the 2024





edition, the minister said: “For anyone considering investment opportunities in Oman, this publication is essential reading. It offers detailed insights into the many exciting opportunities available across various sectors.”

The floor was then given to guest speaker Ammar Al Kharsi, CEO of InvestOMAN, the country’s official investment marketing initiative, managed by MoCIIP, who said: “We align with Oman’s vision for sustainable development by providing curated investment opportunities in targeted sectors, tailored incentives for investors, and comprehensive support services through the InvestOMAN lounge. This event is an excellent platform to engage with business leaders and showcase InvestOMAN’s services. Discussing the critical roles of a tech-driven business landscape and sustainability aligns with our strategy to foster dialogue and support Oman’s long-term growth and development.”

The agenda then moved onto the interactive panel discussions, with renowned industry leaders delving into the opportunities and challenges facing key sectors. A panel on digital transformation brought together: Bader Al Zaidi, CEO of Vodafone Oman; Mustafa Al Hinai, CEO of NEC Group; Maqbool Al Wahaibi, CEO of Oman Data Park; Khalid Jamal Al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa; and Sultan bin Ahmed Al Wahaib, CEO of Oman Broadband Company.

A panel on energy transition featured: Mansoor Al Abdali, CEO of OQ Gas Networks (OQGN); Said Al Shanfari, CEO of Oman Convention and Exhibition Center; David Bird, CEO of OQ8; and Paul Callaghan, Partner of Moore Stephens LLC - Oman.

Following the panel discussions, attendees enjoyed the Oman Business Forum’s networking lunch, an opportunity to connect with peers, build relationships, share experiences, and explore potential business collaborations.

The event was co-organized by The Business Year and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion of Oman, with the support of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Invest Oman, and Oman Business Forum. The event was made possible thanks to our partners: Vodafone Oman (Gold Sponsor); ITHCA Group, OQGN, and Tadom (Silver Sponsors); and Al Tasnim Enterprises (Bronze Sponsor). Other partners supporting the event included: the Oman Exhibition and Convention Centre as venue partner; IBN Firmas, Action Films, and Tamrah as event partners; and Dolphin Village as real estate partner.

The event was extensively covered by The Business Year on its social media platforms, as well as by our valued media partners, including Oman News Agency, Times of Oman, Muscat Daily, Oman Observer, and Mubasher. ✖

## FOCUS

Oman's active neutrality role

# NEUTRAL, *relatively speaking*

*The current crisis in Gaza is perhaps the greatest stress test of Arab-Israeli relations, and Muscat is working overtime to make sure its diplomatic stance retains validity.*

No extraordinary leap of compassion is required to grasp the horror of the ongoing Israel-Hamas war and its humanitarian fallout. Recall that the timeline dates back to October 7, 2023 and the large, sustained attack on Israel launched from the Gaza Strip. Aside from over 1,000 casualties, 248 Israelis were taken hostage, leaving the world wondering what response would ensue. The answer came on October 28 as Israel commenced the ongoing ground operation on the towns of Beit Hanoun and Bureij. Globally, reactions, as with any such event, reflected many individual nations' political and economic alliances. In March 2024, Russia sought to carve itself a role by hosting 14 pro-Palestinian groups, including Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah faction, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad. The meeting stressed the need to "reach a comprehensive national unity that includes all Palestinian forces and factions within the framework of the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

## ACTIVE NEUTRALITY

The phrase "active neutrality" may strike many as an amusing diplomatic oxymoron. And yet, it perfectly describes the Sultanate of Oman's traditional friend-of-all-nations foreign policy. In that sense, the policy matches the celebrated phrase of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Republic of Turkey: "peace at home, peace in the world." Despite its solid relationship with Washington, Muscat has long favored diplomacy and dialogue to falling in lockstep with a geopolitical bloc. On this occasion, however, public ire at worsening conditions in Gaza has prompted a reversal of diplomatic business as usual, with a firm criticism of Washington's blanket support of Israel.

## ACCORDING TO WHO?

In 2020, the diplomatic world applauded the Abraham Accords—a bilateral agreement on Arab-Israeli normalization signed between Israel and the UAE and between Israel and Bahrain on September 15, 2020. Critics of the accords say the signatories' shelving of the demand for a Palestinian state before consenting to normalized relations with Israel is its Achilles heel. And so, while Oman last February allowed Israeli flights to enter its airspace following Saudi Arabia's decision to do so in July 2022, Muscat did not indicate its imminent joining of the accords.

In essence, Oman's stance regarding a future Palestinian state has not changed. This stance, known as the Arab consensus, endorses the two-state solution for Palestine based upon international law. A solution without which peace, Muscat argues, can be but transitory and limited. Moreover, normalized diplomatic relations with Israel are contingent upon such a model. Incidentally, the model stipulates Israel's acceptance of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative calling for an independent Palestinian state within the pre-1967 borders.

## MUSCAT'S WIND CHANGE

Since the death of Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said in 2020, Muscat's position regarding Israel has tangibly stiffened, and needless to say, all the more so since the current crisis in Gaza. Historically, Oman has welcomed any workable initiative with the potential to polish up regional relations with Israel. The logical belief was that this could only promote greater stability in the perennial powder keg that is the Middle East. The current conflict, though, has resulted in more muted relations with the US, despite the Sultanate's admired and required role as

a go-between regarding the US's proclaimed adversaries in the Middle East.

#### THE GOVERNMENT TAKES A STAND

In November 2023, as grim images of devastation at civilian facilities and essential utilities continued to reach screens the world over, Oman petitioned the International Criminal Court to establish a tribunal for war crimes committed against Palestinians in Gaza to prosecute what it labeled war criminals.

Not holding back, the Foreign Ministry declared, "Oman's deep denunciation and strong condemnation at the continued massacres and war crimes committed by Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people." The ministry stressed the "urgent need for a true awakening of the international community, based on its ethical, legal, and humanitarian responsibilities, to put an end to Israel's

clear disregard and defiance, as well as its violation of international principles, laws, and agreements." Then, on December 8, Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Al-Busaidi blasted Washington for its veto of a draft UN Security Council resolution appealing for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

As casualties mount while utilities and emergency services are severely disrupted, the broad brush-stroke sentiment is that a ceasefire should be sought. Muscat ultimately maintains its support for the right of the Palestinians to self-determination and statehood, a formula that seems more remote than ever in the current conjuncture. Meanwhile, it has wisely played a Janus-headed game in the diplomatic arena. Quiet maintenance of relations with Washington in one direction, and in the other, an echoing of the public outcry against the inevitable human suffering of armed conflict. ✕



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# NEW *wave*

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry strives to develop opportunities for cooperation between the Omani private sector and its counterparts abroad and further boost economic relations.

Sheikh Faisal bin Abdullah Al-Rawas  
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD,  
OMAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY



**What areas of the Omani economy provide greater opportunities for foreign investors?**

The Sultanate of Oman is unique with many investment opportunities in various sectors, since Oman Vision 2040 has placed the attracting of investments among its economic priorities. Accordingly, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, within the framework of its strategic directions consistent with Oman Vision 2040, is working to improve the business environment in Oman and expand the basis for economic diversification, particularly in the dependable sectors, including the manufacturing sector, tourism, mining, food security, and logistics services, in addition to the empowered sectors such as health, education, and IT.

**From which countries and regions would you like to see more cooperation and trade with Oman?**

The Sultanate's private sector is open to joining trade and investment cooperation and establishing partnerships with its counterparts in various countries of the world. There are undoubtedly prospects for economic integration with many countries, whether GCC region, other brotherly Arab countries, or friendly countries. Hence, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, through business councils, the joint Arab-foreign chambers, business forums, and the visiting of delegations, always works to create opportunities for cooperation between the Omani private sector and its

counterparts abroad.

**What measures or policies can increase the economic competitiveness of the Sultanate of Oman in general and Muscat in particular?**

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry welcomes all measures and policies that enhance incentives and facilities for the business and investment environment. These measures and incentives are considered as part of the priorities of the government, which has initiated many facilities, including developing laws, simplifying procedures, reducing fees, providing incentives and facilities, and improving the investment environment in general, as well as paying attention to developing the governorates. Also, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, within the framework of the powers granted, is submitting proposals and visions to contribute to review laws and decisions related to the business environment.

**What is your evaluation of the efforts to digitalize government portals?**

The efforts made by the Sultanate of Oman in digital transformation will have a positive impact on attracting investment and increasing tourism flow, as the ease of starting business through related platforms, including the Invest Easy portal, and facilitation of various procedures in a digital manner with no need for the attendance of the concerned person, is considered one of the elements of investment attraction. Also, the ease of obtaining tourist visas and tourism promotion

through digital platforms is one of the factors that contributed to increase the number of tourists into Oman. This is a legitimate and logical matter for investors, companies, and institutions concerned with investment and seeking to deal with these government procedures efficiently and with the least effort and cost. The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, within its strategic directions related to its roles, is working to achieve digital transformation in its services provided to members in order to keep with the government digital transformation.

**What are your expectations for the Omani economy for 2024?**

As Oman moves forward in implementing the Oman Vision 2040, and the economic reforms it includes, the Omani economy anticipates further growth with favorable oil prices as well as the growth of the non-oil sector with an additional guarantee including the solidity of the banking sector in the country. All these advantages have been confirmed by the improvement in the Sultanate of Oman's credit and economic ratings and indicators from international economic institutions such as Moody's credit rating agency, while the World Bank also expects the Sultanate of Oman's economy to achieve 2.7% growth in 2024 and 2.9% in 2025. Therefore, the indicators of international institutions confirm that the Sultanate of Oman's economy is on the right track to achieve the aspirations and goals of Oman Vision 2040. ✖



Image: Matyas Rehak



عمارة تجارة وصناعة عمان  
Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry



### Identity

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) is a private institution of public benefit which aims to organise the commercial and industrial interests of its members, develop, defend, and represent them in various fields.



### Vision

Developing the Omani private sector to be an essential partner in sustainable economic development.



### Mission

The official representation of the private sector locally and internationally, serving and developing its interests using innovative tools that integrate into the business community.

## Corporate Values

OCCI values are derived from the word "TEAM", as each letter is a symbol of an institutional value that promotes the teamwork and ensures participation with various parties in achieving economic development objectives.

### Trust

Building professional Capacity, and activating Community communication channels.

### Empowerment

Strengthening expertise and expanding the decision-making space.

### Achievement

Implementation of functions associated with outcomes and optimal use of resources.

### Meaning

Focusing on common values and providing added value to work.

# OCCI Services



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# AN ECONOMIC *shotgun*

*The purpose of a national program such as Oman Vision 2040 is to determine the social, economic, and industrial policy most appropriate to pursue for sustainable growth.*

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To succeed in its purpose, a national program must turn projections into the widespread dissemination of goals and proliferation of knowledge-based industrial and commercial practices to release the potential of existing competitive advantages, foster new ones, and build local content. For Oman, like other GCC nations, this entails multi-sectoral diversification. The ambitions are profound. The country intends to double the per capita share of GDP to 6% growth on the back of the non-oil economy, notably tourism, logistics, manufacturing, fisheries, and mining. In step with diversification is a drive toward developing local talent and expertise, in this case known as Omanization. Duly, strict targets for the employment of capable locals will retain a skilled workforce as more sectors begin to flourish. The Vision targets Omani nationals holding 42% of private sector jobs. Incentivizing FDI is a given, and the goal is for foreign investment to claim 10 percent of GDP. Underpinning all of this are the economic policies and legislation that guarantee financial sustainability and the diversification of public revenues.

## **ON THE RIGHT PATH**

Officials are positive about Oman's economic trajectory for 2024 as the country pursues its 10th Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025) and three-year fiscal stability program launched in October 2022 to accelerate economic recovery from pandemic-related impacts. The Ministry of Finance forecasts a minimum 3% GDP growth in 2024. Preliminary figures put the 2023 figure at roughly 2%, modestly above the average for the wider GCC. Tellingly, growth is chiefly attributed to the rise in the value-added of

non-oil activities of 2.7%, at USD47.2 billion by the end of 3Q2023, up from USD46 billion in the same period of 2022.

## **ADDRESSING LOCAL CHALLENGES...**

The IMF, too, has recognized Oman's favorable economic trajectory as being, "Supported by favorable oil prices and sustained reform momentum." In a recent report, the Fund noted, however, that while Oman has registered economic progress the hydrocarbon sector still led the field. Non-hydrocarbon activities—largely funded by the state in terms of infrastructure—are noted as being subject to oil price fluctuations. And this situation is the very definition of why diversification is necessary. The report underlines the huge impact on the oil economies of the 2014–15 and 2020 oil shocks, not to mention the gathering pace of the global energy transition. Last December, Fitch Ratings did, in fact, note that the country's drive to boost domestic green hydrogen production could ultimately support its GDP growth, fiscal revenue, and the balance of payments for the long term during the energy transition. Indeed, Oman targets minimum renewable hydrogen production of a million tons annually by 2030, with capacity rising to 3.75 million tons by 2040 and 8.5 million tons by 2050. All this indicates that Muscat is heeding the IMF's recommendation of "...a comprehensive reform agenda capable of ensuring economic resilience with reduced dependence on the spillover from 'hydrocarbon windfalls.'"

The Fund also pointed out that Oman's workforce remained oriented towards a public sector that continues to provide higher salaries and greater benefits despite the need to boost private sector contribution.

Accordingly, the Fund noted, “The wage differential between public and private sector jobs has distorted incentives and allocation of resources in the labor market, particularly in mid- to low-skill jobs, with negative implications for productivity.”

#### **...WITH SERIOUS FUNDING**

Oman's response to these findings has been swift and should have a catalytic effect on the broader economy. Because as the curtains parted on 2024, the Oman Investment Authority launched a USD5.2bn fund - The Future Fund Oman - to support private sector SMEs in the promising non-oil sectors of tourism, manufacturing and green energy, maritime resources, and technology. The Ministry of Economy believes that as the resulting momentum galvanizes activity, it will, in turn, attract FDI.

#### **SPOT THE TOURIST**

The IMF report acknowledged that Oman's tourism sector has recovered significantly since COVID-19, citing UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) data putting international visitor numbers at 2.1 million, up 343% in 2022, while 17.6% below pre-pandemic 2019. Tourism is a pillar of Oman Vision 2040, and in revenue terms, it has an estimated annual value of USD23.4 billion by 2040. Aside from the local initiatives of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, a single tourist visa for the GCC region is likely to be introduced this year or the next, as part of the economic diversification-oriented GCC 2030 tourism strategy. A strategy shooting for tourist arrivals to six GCC nations—Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE, and Saudi Arabia—of close to 130 million by 2030, a stark contrast to 2022's 39.8 million.

#### **THE RIGHT CHEMISTRY**

In March, a prime example of Oman's diversified industrial strategy took the form of a USD1.3bn polysilicon production facility located at the Sohar Freezone. Behind the investment, scheduled for completion in 2025, is Omani company United Solar Polysilicon (FZC) SPC. What's significant here is the annual 100,000-ton output of high-quality metallurgical silicon. This product, a high-purity form of silicon, happens to be a key raw material in the production of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels. Thus, the local project plugs Oman into the massive global renewable energy economy. Small wonder that on the occasion of the project's groundbreaking Dr. Saleh bin Said Masan, Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, declared, “This project underscores the significance of the industrial sector in achieving the envisioned economic diversification goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040.” It was noted, too, that the polysilicon project would boost the status of the Sohar Port and Freezone as a global trade hub of regional impact. “The project,” he continued, “...reflects the sincere desire to continue the efforts initiated by Oman to encourage local investment, attract foreign investments, localize their operations, and align with the goals of the future Oman Vision 2040.”

The growth of Oman's knowledge-based economy depends upon diversification, with profound industrial, economic, and social consequences. And while oil will not fade into insignificance, a new local workforce will emerge capable of developing local content across a wide terrain of endeavor. ✘



**Nayaz Mohammed**  
PARTNER,  
PWC

**BIO**

*Nayaz Mohammed is a Partner in PwC and leads the technology consulting practice in Oman. He has over 22 years' experience in technology consulting involving eServices transformation for government entities, ERP systems selection, business continuity, IT DR, crisis management, and cybersecurity. He holds an MBA and a bachelor's degree in engineering in addition to numerous other certifications. He was the leader for SOC and resilience services across the Middle East and North African region in another Big 4 firm prior to joining PwC.*



**Abdullah Al Busaidi**  
CYBER SECURITY MANAGER,  
PWC

**BIO**

*Abdullah Al Busaidi is a technology consulting manager at PwC with over six years of professional experience working with the big four advising clients in cybersecurity, personal data protection, business resilience, and digital transformation. Throughout his career he has successfully managed large-scale and nationwide transformation projects across Oman and the GCC. He holds a master's in cybersecurity and management from the UK and a bachelor's in software engineering from the US, along with certifications in GIAC continuous monitoring, ethical hacking, and ISO 27001 implementation.*

# EMERGING *landscape*

*PwC advocates for business-friendly mechanisms in Oman that balance data protection with safe business practices.*

**What is Oman's history of regulation with regard to data privacy?**

**ABDULLAH AL BUSAIDI** Oman's efforts toward data privacy were relatively limited until recently. In 2019, the healthcare law addressed the handling of patients' private information, although it had certain limitations and did not cover all aspects comprehensively. It focused on obtaining consent for data sharing but did not address data transfers outside of Oman or protocols for sharing. Prior to that, the Islamic Transactions Law of 2008 included a section on personal data privacy (Chapter 7), which was subsequently replaced by the Oman Data Privacy Law in February of 2022. This new law introduced definitions of personal data, outlined the roles of market players and regulators, and specified the rights of data owners and obligations of data controllers and processors. The Executive regulations were recently released by the Ministry of Transportation, Communication, and Information Technology. These regulations are expected to provide further guidance on data collection, safe processing practices, and the protection of data rights and personal information.

**NAYAZ MOHAMMED** Over the past decade, there has been a significant rise in digitalization, transforming the way citizens interact with government services. Instead of visiting physical offices, people now rely on mobile applications for tasks like obtaining licenses and other government services. This shift toward digitalization has resulted in a vast amount of data being managed electronically. The introduction of data protection laws comes at an opportune moment to safeguard citizen data from potential misuse or unauthorized access in this digital landscape.

**What are the main activities businesses should consider when they think about compliance?**

**AAB** The law sets out high-level requirements, prompting businesses to consider the necessary steps. First, they must appoint a data protection officer to oversee organizational data privacy. Next, they must assess the data collected and its processing and protection methods. They must establish a repository of processing activities (ROPA) to maintain a master database of personal data and also implement

mechanisms and communication channels for data protection. They must also develop a risk management framework, especially when outsourcing data processing, and also conduct regular risk assessments to ensure effective risk management. It is crucial to have clear visibility of data information, obtain consent from data owners, and maintain transparent communication. They must also display a privacy notice on the website outlining data management practices and implement robust security controls and a comprehensive risk management framework.

**NM** The government has outlined a 10-step process as a valuable reference point. Appointing a responsible individual is crucial to drive the program and ensure accountability. It is essential to maintain records of processing activities and be able to provide clear answers regarding data storage. Security is of the utmost importance. Effective management of contractors is also vital, as you bear the responsibility for their actions.

**How do you see the impact of these laws in Oman? Is the market ready for this?**

**AAB** The law serves as a governance framework for overseeing data collection and processing, providing a secure environment for both data owners and businesses to thrive. It ensures that everyone is aware of their rights and obligations. We should consider business-friendly mechanisms that balance data protection with business practices. It is important to differentiate our law from those in the GCC and globally, considering the compliance requirements for businesses operating in multiple jurisdictions. Aligning laws fosters easier cross-jurisdictional operations. Overall, this law will facilitate market growth in digitalization and create opportunities for data protection service providers in Oman.

**NM** Countries worldwide, including the Middle East, are embracing data privacy practices as part of the World Economic Forum. Alignment is crucial to protect citizens while transitioning to a free economy. Although it presents challenges, this new concept is necessary. Companies in the region may require time to adapt, as the law is still being implemented. However, progress is being made, and we anticipate readiness within two or three years. ✖



Paul Callaghan  
PARTNER,  
MOORE STEPHENS OMAN

#### BIO

Paul Callaghan is a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and holds a diploma in insurance from the Chartered Insurance Institute of London. He has over 34 years professional experience gained in the UK, UAE, and Oman, including more than 28 years in Oman. He is a partner in Moore Stephens LLC, where he heads the consulting and advisory services, and was previously a partner in a Big 4 firm. Callaghan attended the Moore Global Alumni Leadership Training course at Harvard Business School.

#### What sectors does Moore Stephens Oman operate in, and how does it position itself in the market?

Moore Stephens LLC, Oman, part of the Moore Global Network, is a professional services firm that specializes in providing consulting, risk advisory, and corporate finance solutions to a diverse client base spanning sectors such as energy, government, and finance. As part of a group of companies in the Middle East, we lead regional and global growth and collaboration initiatives, with a specific focus on areas like renewable energy, ESG, and audit. With a robust presence and a history of over 100 years, our global network support us in leveraging opportunities in Oman, a country that witnessed two credit upgrades in 2023 and will hopefully be upgraded to investment-grade status in 2024. We actively support the implementation of Oman's Vision 2040, aiming to diversify the economy and promote sustainable development.

#### What challenges and opportunities do you identify in Oman?

There are two major challenges for our industry in Oman. First, non-listed companies that have bank facilities over a certain amount have to file their audited accounts within four months of the year-end. This creates immense pressure on many smaller companies in Oman and audit firms. There are possible ways to address this, perhaps with a tiered structure where smaller companies with smaller bank facilities could be given more time. The second challenge is attracting and retaining talented people. The pool of young Omani accounting graduates or finance graduates who are interested in joining professional firms is extremely limited. We have addressed this by using expats, though many simply view Oman as a stepping stone for their careers. We also collaborate closely with other Moore Global Network firms and niche consultancies to support us in delivering exceptional value to our clients. A major part of Vision 2040 has to do with sustainability and ESG—the stock market recently announced mandatory ESG reporting for public companies. I view all these as great opportunities, not only for Oman but also for Moore Stephens Oman. We will also continue to support investors coming into Oman. ✖



Ali Al Muqaibal  
CEO,  
SHARAKAH

#### For 25 years, Sharakah has been at the forefront of SME development in Oman. What are some of its proudest achievements?

The fact that we have grown over the past 25 years is a testimony to the previous management, board, and proper governance over a closed-funded organization. In 1998, Sharakah was one of the pioneering organizations in the region when it came to SMEs. Sharakah was founded by royal decree with the objective of supporting the SME sector based upon four pillars. The first is access to finance, which is the main challenge many SMEs face. This could be achieved through equity financing or debt financing. We have been able to fund almost USD27 million worth of projects to date, with a significant multiplier effect. If there were five multipliers, the impact on the economy itself could be close to USD100 million. The next pillar is providing capacity building and business consultancy. We engage with entrepreneurs and provide mentoring. We assess their entrepreneurship skills and offer them training. The third pillar is working together with other stakeholders to promote initiatives

related to improving regulations or initiatives in the SME arena. Finally, we spread awareness about entrepreneurship. The culture in Oman is centered around completing education and getting a government or private sector job. We try to plant seeds where entrepreneurship can grow. We are proud to have delivered over 65 workshops and more than 2,000 hours of consultancy work.

#### How do you assess the SME sector and entrepreneurship awareness in Oman today?

We have come a long way. In 1998, we were the leading organization in the country. Today, we have a government authority—the Public Authority for Small & Medium Enterprises Development (Riyada)—overseeing the sector, marking a crucial milestone. There are other entities in the sector working to solve some of these challenges, be it access to financing, funding capacity, or promoting the SME sectors. When it comes to new ventures and startups, the technology is always evolving, and we are starting to see an ecosystem building around startups. Thanks to the internet and technology, opening a business is becoming significantly easier. We see more initiatives being taken there. The government has a strategy to significantly increase investments, and SMEs are at the heart of that strategy. ✖

#### BIO

Ali Al Muqaibal, a holder of an MBA from INSEAD and a bachelor's degree from Arizona State University, has over 20 years of diverse expertise in corporate strategy, investment, portfolio management, and digital transformation across consumer and enterprise sectors. His notable roles include leadership positions at Shell Oman Marketing Company SAOG, Occidental Oman, Oman Oil Company, and Oman Oil Marketing Company.



# Compass Risk Support Services Your One Stop Solution to Debt Collection.



## Debt Recovery

Our dedicated team employs strategic methods to recover outstanding debts efficiently and ethically.



## Skip Tracing and Field Visits

Utilizing advanced techniques, we track down individuals with precision, ensuring effective communication and resolution.



## Legal Collection

Navigate the complexities of debt collection with our legal expertise, ensuring compliance and successful resolution.



## Verification

Trust in our meticulous verification processes, providing accurate and reliable information for informed decision-making.

## WHO ARE WE?

Established in February 2012, Compass Risk Support Services is a premier debt collection agency based in the Sultanate of Oman. We specialize in commercial, corporate, and consumer debt collection, offering a full spectrum of services across the Middle East, North Africa, and worldwide.

## COMMITTED TO DELIVERING EXCELLENCE

At Compass Risk Support Services, we prioritize expertise, quality, and efficiency in our debt collection services. Our goal is to be the most reliable firm in the industry, resolving outstanding collections promptly and efficiently.

## OUR PROCESS

- ✓ **Meticulous Collection Methods**
- ✓ **Swift Remittance**
- ✓ **Global Credit Solutions Partnership**

## WHY CHOOSE US?

- ✓ **Global Reach**  
Our extensive network ensures the recovery of debts from any corner of the world.
- ✓ **Industry Compliance**  
Adhering strictly to standards and guidelines, we safeguard your reputation with ethical practices.
- ✓ **Experienced Professionals**  
Benefit from over thirty years of collective experience in commercial, corporate, and consumer collections.
- ✓ **Multilingual Support**  
Our highly trained staff speaks Arabic, English, Persian, and Urdu, facilitating smooth communication.
- ✓ **Tailored Solutions**  
We integrate seamlessly with your credit and collection department, providing customized solutions.

## GET IN TOUCH

- 📍 P.O Box 2123, Postal code 112 Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
- ☎ +968 24706882
- ✉ support@compassrss.com
- 🌐 www.compassrss.com



# CLEAR *cut*

Said Al-Harrasi  
CEO,  
COMPASS RISK SUPPORT SERVICES



The first debt collection agency in Oman, Compass Risk Support Services' success in the past decade stems from its dedicated techniques, extensive regional experience, and skilled team.

**Compass Risk Support Services helps clients in the Middle East, North Africa, and worldwide to collect debt. Who are its clients, and from which sectors do they originate?**

Compass started in 2012 as the first debt collection company in Oman. We signed up with most of the banks in GCC. There was a significant Omani workforce in countries such as Qatar and UAE that took out loans but failed to repay their debts. Those banks became our first clients, and our portfolio comprised OMR20-30 million dedicated to collecting those debts. Our approach to debt collection involves either soft collection or legal collection. With soft collection, we aim to close 90% of our cases before resorting to legal measures. For the remaining 10% where a resolution is not possible, we initiate legal action with our team of lawyers; however, some 90% of our cases are successfully resolved out of court thanks to our dedicated professional staff. Our clients include financial institutions as well as telecommunication companies, insurance companies, and business houses. Initially, 70-80% of our clientele hailed from the GCC. Still, after a decade, this has shifted to 70% Omani clients and 30% GCC. Our success can be attributed to a clear system and a dedicated staff. Furthermore, we do not charge clients unless we successfully collect their money. There is no upfront payment; instead, we charge a percentage of the amount collected.

**There are several debt collection agencies in Oman. What makes you stand out from the competition?**

Compass Risk Support Services was the first to start debt collection, which gives us a unique first-mover advantage and leverage in understanding the local market. Second, we are actively engaged in international networking. Furthermore, we have a robust system that includes strategic investments in technology and proper records for every stage of the debt collection process. For example, some clients only have the names of the debtors, and here our dedicated team can conduct research and trace the individual. We are a people-centric company and accordingly invest in proper training for our staff as well as the best technology. We also have exten-

sive know-how given our history and experience in the sector. Thus, we have created a significant brand equity that sets us apart from the competition.

**What trends have you seen in the debt collection space in recent years?**

After the pandemic, there has been an increase in business because of the economic situation. Another notable trend has been an increased challenge in debt collection because more people have lost their jobs. As a result, we now need to use different techniques of negotiation. At times, our clients have even reduced their demand. Whilst business has been growing, at the same time, the challenges involved in debt collection are also increasing.

**What are the main challenges in expanding and growing further?**

Internally, we need to secure the right resources and people who share the same philosophy and values. To grow further, the first step entails finding the right people. We are designing new incentive packages to motivate, attract, and retain people to our team. Another challenge is the increased market competition, which means we always have to come up with new differentiators or advantages where in order to attract and retain clients. Additionally, cost control is vital in a competitive market; however, to retain our staff and train them, we must also increase their benefits and incentives.

**What is your outlook for the company and the country in 2024?**

I am extremely optimistic. For 2024, I see more opportunities, especially in our business. His Majesty and the government are working hard to attract more investment, which means more growth and business in real estate, industry, and so on. More companies entering the market implies more business for us and more opportunities. The government is also working hard and investing to diversify from oil to non-oil contribution. We predict 2024 to be much better than 2023, with significantly more expenditure. ✖

**1st**  
to introduce debt  
collection service  
in Oman

**BIO**  
Said Al-Harrasi is the founding CEO of Compass Risk Solution Services. His career has spanned over two decades, including experience at the Royal Oman Police dedicated to various facets of policing and investigative work.

# TBY ANALYTICS *Oman 2024*

96 interviews were conducted for *The Business Year: Oman 2024 Analytics*.

## BUSINESS CONFIDENCE INDEX

How confident are you about the outlook for business in Oman this year (1-5)?

**4**  
AVERAGE RATING

### SECTORS TO WATCH



GREEN ECONOMY  
**4**



FINANCE  
**3**



ENERGY  
**4**



INDUSTRY  
**3**



IT & TELECOMS  
**5**



TRANSPORT  
**3**



CONSTRUCTION & REAL ESTATE  
**3**



AGRIBUSINESS  
**2**



TOURISM  
**4**



EDUCATION  
**4**

## ADVANTAGES & CHALLENGES

What are the most commonly mentioned advantages and challenges of doing business in Oman?

### ADVANTAGES

- Strategic location
- Political stability
- More diversified economy than neighbors
- Investment incentives
- FTA network
- Young workforce
- Tourism potential
- Stable finance sector

### CHALLENGES

- Dependency on oil
- Limited market size and worker pool
- Some red tape
- Susceptibility to regional events

## A CAPITAL *idea*

*Oman is working overtime to position itself as a transparent, business-friendly safe haven for investment in the tumultuous Middle East.*

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To achieve its economic objectives, build its in-country value through the uptake of technology and know-how, and take fuller advantage of its geo-strategic location, Oman has opted for legal reform to render foreign investment more enticing, predictable and simpler to achieve.

In April 2024, the Sultanate became the region's pioneering nation to abolish minimum capital stipulations for foreign investment. Upon the occasion of the announcement, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, His Excellency Qais Mohammed Al Yousef stressed Oman's welcoming stance towards investors, who, he added, could expect to receive every support for successful commercial operation. He also acknowledged a secondary purpose of removing the risk potentially faced when conducting so-called hidden trade, where a foreign national deals through an Omani citizen leaving the latter with the full burden once they leave the country.

Until recently, in general, the minimum capital requirement for foreign firms in Oman had been around USD390,000. The sum was determined further by the nature of the proposed business venture. Then, too, company type was a further factor, say, for a limited liability company (LLC) where the minimum share capital requirement was around USD52,000 unless the firm operated in certain industries considered to have greater requirements, such as finance.

The latest measure is, of course, part of a systematic drive to render the Sultanate a competitive investment address well-diversified beyond hydrocarbons. That, after all, is the essence of Oman Vision 2040. The commercial environment has therefore undergone a broader welcoming of foreign participation that in 2019 witnessed a new raft of regulations. Notable among them is the foreign capital investment

law that permits 100% foreign company ownership, raised from 70%. Moreover, a foreign investor is no longer required a local partner. Meanwhile, a bankruptcy law removed the guesswork that might have deterred some investors. And all of this is in addition to already-existing tax benefits and custom duty waivers. Oman's competitiveness drive is also geared at boosting its ranking in terms of the ease of doing business.

Then in March 2022, the Muscat Stock Exchange lifted restrictions on the foreign ownership of listed companies, as the government announced that 35 state-owned concerns would go to market in the coming five years, which would likely generate massive liquidity for the market.

The recent economic blight arising from COVID-19 was widely felt the globe over. And yet, Oman did not suffer unduly. Even in 2021, FDI printed at USD44 billion, rising a healthy 7.7% YoY. And, yes, a heavy 70% of the total was allotted to oil and gas extraction, as after all, hydrocarbons account for 30% of GDP, 60% of exports and more than 75% of state revenues. FDI in the financial sector, manufacturing and real estate trailed behind. UK-based investors claimed the lion's share of USD20 billion, ahead of the US on USD5.5 billion, the UAE on USD2.6 billion, Kuwait on USD2.3 billion, and China on USD2 billion.

One may conclude, then, that hydrocarbon revenues will not cease to keep Oman flush for years to come. Yet, the investment menu is set to offer a wider choice given the prospective privatization of numerous state concerns. Also, oil revenues have floated much of the diversification drive, including the infrastructure required to develop other crucial sectors such as logistics, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and the burgeoning tourism sector. To those we may also add the nation's huge commitment to sustainable development and a greening of the economy. ✖

## INTERVIEW

# SATISFIED *clients*



Established in 2004, Morison Muscat has evolved into a leading professional services firm with a strong reputation for quality, focusing on audit, taxation, and business consultancy.

Nasser Al-Khamisi  
COUNTRY PARTNER,  
MORISON MUSCAT, OMAN

Training sessions  
for over

**3k**

clients across  
different sectors

In 2021, Oman  
introduced a  
value-added tax  
system

**How has the firm evolved over the years, and what key factors have contributed to its longevity and success?**

Morison Muscat is essentially a chartered accountancy firm. I started the firm in 2004, with two other partners. Over the years, the firm has evolved into a leading professional services firm with a high reputation for quality. Our core focus is audit, taxation, and business consultancy. Today, we have an impressive client list in various sectors such as IT, logistics, insurance, telecoms, oil and gas, education, and other FMCG companies. There are three key factors that have contributed to our growth and success. First, we focus on building a strong, long-term relationship of trust and quality with our clients. Second, we place great emphasis on delivering high-quality services in a timely and cost-effective way that leads to client satisfaction. Lastly, we are looking to constantly innovate and enhance our services using the latest available tools and technology to stay ahead of our competition.

**How does Morison Muscat utilize technology to enhance its service and improve customer experiences?**

Morison Muscat is focused on innovative technologies. For example, we utilize a specialized cloud-based audit software called CaseWare that undergoes annual updates. We consistently provide training to our staff on using this software and ensure that our clients are informed about the requirements to meet the updated accounting standards. Our goal is to align these standards with the software we use. Additionally, we employ a CRM system to track our clients' needs. There are several stages involved in the process, from initial client requests to the first face-to-face meeting and defining the scope of the work, and, finally, presenting a proposal to the clients. All this information is stored within our CRM, which we refer to as a "work in progress." We leverage technology to effectively address clients' requirements and efficiently execute assignments.

**How does Morison Muscat integrate sustainability and corporate responsibility principles into its operations?**

We encourage such initiatives, though the extent to which they can be implemented varies across different businesses. Currently, we do not operate significantly in the manufacturing industry, so the opportunities and percentage of sustainability implementation differ from business to business. As an example, we encourage our staff to minimize printing by promoting paperless practices, such as not printing emails. Additionally, we contribute to society through various social responsibility initiatives. Looking ahead, we have plans to relocate to smart offices that rely on solar energy; however, we are currently limited by rules and regulations in our current location. Nevertheless, we support and sponsor numerous initiatives related to sustainability.

**How do you plan to leverage market opportunities and guide the company toward success in the coming years?**

Success can be defined in many different ways. One simple way to define it for our business would be to say "happy clients and happy staff." If these two factors are present, then growth is the natural outcome. We primarily focus on SMEs because we see some of them as the MNCs of the future. Their growth is our growth and vice versa. Our core business revolves around compliance, where we assist our clients in meeting government rules and regulations regarding tax and audit compliance. In 2021, Oman introduced a value-added tax system. We collaborated with various organizations, including banks, to provide training to their clients through Webinars as well as direct contact programs. We conducted training sessions for over 3,000 clients across different sectors. Morison Muscat has established an agreement with the Oman Energy Association to provide training for their staff. Some of the other ways that we look to our success in the coming years is through inorganic growth, building collaboration and partnerships, expanding our bouquet of services and of course leveraging cutting-edge technologies such as AI, digital marketing, and so on. The future has challenges, but these challenges also provide opportunities. I am excited about our future. ✖

## BIO

Nasser Al-Khamisi, the Country Partner at Morison Muscat, brings over 20 years of experience in finance, having started his career at KPMG. He is an MBA graduate from Strathclyde University, UK, and is recognized for his expertise in accounting, auditing, and regulatory compliance. Nasser serves as an Accounting Advisory Expert for the Omani courts and is a key consultant on corporate structuring and taxation in Oman.

# Building Better **Business** Globally.



#### **Audit Services**

Precise audit expertise for financial transparency and compliance excellence.



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Strategic tax guidance for financial optimization and compliance.



#### **Accounting Services**

Accurate, Insightful Accounting Solutions for Your Business Success.



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Unlocking business potential through strategic insights and solutions.

## About **Morison Muscat**

At Morison Muscat, we take immense pride in being your trusted partner in the world of business and financial advisory services. With a legacy of excellence and a vision to serve Oman's thriving business community, we bring a wealth of knowledge, global expertise, and a commitment to your success.

For many years, we've stood by businesses of all sizes, assisting them in navigating the complexities of finance, taxation, and strategic growth. We've cultivated deep-rooted relationships with our clients, guiding them through every challenge and opportunity.

## Get in **Touch**

**Address:**

Post Box 2123, PC 112 Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman

**Email Address:**

info@morisonmuscat.com

**Phone number:**

+968 2206 0040

**Website:**

www.morisonmuscat.com

# Helping clients meet **the world's evolving energy needs**



# Green Economy & Sustainability

## GREEN DREAMS

**O**man's economic landscape is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by a national commitment to sustainability. This chapter explores the various sectors shaping this green wave.

The Oman Environment Authority spearheads environmental awareness by integrating sustainability education into school curriculums and collaborating with universities, with public awareness campaigns further amplifying this message. As Abdullah Al Amri, Chairman of OEA, told us, "We are dedicated to preparing and qualifying the first-class students entering primary school for graduation in 2040 with essential environmental subjects such as zero-emission climate change." Waste reduction is another area witnessing progress, with Oman aiming for an impressive 85-90% recycling rate by 2030.

Public and private entities are joining forces to propel Oman toward a greener future. Oman LNG Development Foundation exemplifies this collaboration through a holistic and inclusive approach to sustainability, tackling environmental preservation alongside social initiatives in healthcare and women's empowerment. The Foundation also actively explores renewable energy and hydrogen transition. "Oman LNG has long strived to implement sustainability across all domains from our day-to-day business activities to our social initiatives and programs," says Amor Al Matani, CEO of Oman LNG Development Foundation.

The Oman Hydrogen Centre plays a pivotal role in this transition by researching and developing hydrogen technologies aligned with Oman's Vision 2040. Its work on establishing dedicated land allocation for hydrogen production positions Oman as a frontrunner in the MENA region. Sausan Al Riyami, Director of the Centre, explains, "The creation of a dedicated body for hydrogen land allocation, separate from existing government or private sectors, is a noteworthy lesson

learned."

The business sector is not lagging. Asyad Group, the country's foremost logistics company, integrates environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors into its strategy, while Gulf Torch Oman capitalizes on green opportunities in CO2 recovery and hydrogen solutions. Essam Alsheibany, Vice President Sustainability at Asyad, told TBV, "Global impact is crucial, especially for shipping lines. ESG disclosures matter in the global market, influencing our approach. Green financing, offering lower interest rates, drives our sustainability commitment."

44.01, a pioneering company, utilizes Oman's abundant peridotite rock to permanently remove CO2 from the atmosphere. Its innovative technology offers a promising solution for the global fight against climate change. Talal Hasan, its CEO, explains, "Our technology eliminates CO2 using a special rock called peridotite that is found in abundance in Oman. When peridotite comes into contact with CO2, it naturally mineralizes it—or to put it another way, it turns the CO2 into rock. Our technology speeds up this natural reaction so that the CO2 turns to rock in months rather than decades."

One exciting opportunity, as explained by Simon Wilson, Technical Director at Five Oceans Environment Services (5OES), is the development of large-scale renewable energy projects with hydrogen production. 5OES is actively involved in several such projects, like Hyport Duqm, which integrates renewable energy with hydrogen and ammonia production for export.

Oman's green credentials are bolstered by a collaborative effort between the government, private sector, and innovative companies. This commitment to sustainability ensures a future where environmental protection and economic growth are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary forces propelling Oman toward a thriving green future. ✖

The sunny deserts of Oman are ideal for solar panels

### PRIMARY ENERGY CONSUMPTION BY SOURCE (2022, IN TWH)

SOURCE: OUR WORLD IN DATA



### SHARE OF ELECTRICITY GENERATED BY LOW-CARBON SOURCES (%)

SOURCE: OUR WORLD IN DATA

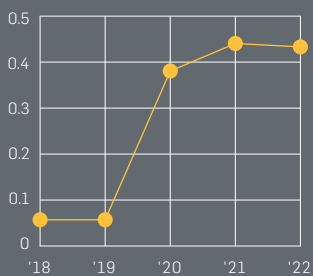


Image: Marcin Osman

# GREENER Oman

Abdullah Bin Ali Al Amri  
CHAIRMAN,  
OMAN ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY (EA)



Working on a combination of public engagement, media outreach, and youth involvement, EA has been able to significantly raise overall environmental awareness in Oman.

**One of the core missions of Oman EA is to educate and foster awareness of the environment. What strategies does it employ to achieve this objective?**

Our approach revolves around two key pillars. First, we emphasize the significance of Oman itself, shedding light on the country's importance. Second, we highlight the ongoing paradigm shift toward sustainability within Oman's environmental landscape. One critical aspect of our strategy involves raising awareness among the general public and enhancing educational curricula at all levels. We are dedicated to preparing and qualifying the first-class students entering primary school for graduation in 2040. Collaborating closely with the Ministry of Education, EA has undertaken efforts to enrich the curricula with essential environmental subjects such as zero-emission climate change. This commitment extends to higher education, where we aim to shape committees in universities, empowering students to become facilitators of environmental efforts on campus. Initiatives such as integrating environmental topics into university courses and the development of sustainability master's programs contribute significantly to nurturing a culture of awareness and qualification for the younger generation, making them climate change allies.

**How satisfied are you with the current level of environmental awareness in the country?**

Oman boasts several active NGOs, including the Oman Environmental Society, and numerous youth teams distributed across the nation. These groups invest considerable effort in protecting the environment and actively participate in annual campaigns, such as coral reef cleaning initiatives. Leveraging various media channels, including formal media, social platforms like X, Instagram, and Facebook, and engaging different ministries, our environmental message reaches diverse audiences. Oman's commitment to environmental protection is evident in events like the recent environmental harvest of 2023, where achievements and ongoing efforts were showcased publicly. In this context, involving the youth in formal delegations, like those to COP28, underlines our commitment to integrating global youth movements into Oman's local fabric.

**Considering the global and local environmental challeng-**

**es, what are the primary challenges facing Oman currently?**

Oman encounters challenges akin to those faced globally. Scientific research and forward-thinking initiatives play a pivotal role. A key component of our strategy is the national commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. This vision, declared by His Majesty, provides clear direction and goals for our environmental endeavors. Collaborating on an international level, as seen in initiatives like the Oman Blue Carbon Project, demonstrates Oman's commitment to global environmental objectives. Local projects, such as capturing CO2 from the atmosphere and innovative approaches like injecting it into the Aphrodite Rocks, showcase our dedication to finding solutions. Our National Determined Contributions, submitted to the UN, outline our mitigation efforts, including a 7% direct reduction and a conditional 14%, contingent on international support. We are not merely tackling environmental challenges but actively contributing to global environmental solutions.

**Oman has made significant progress in waste recycling. What plans and strategies are in place to further increase this percentage?**

Waste recycling in Oman has witnessed commendable progress, reaching 37% in 2023 and subsequently increasing to 37% by the end of that year. Our focus revolves around three essential elements. First, we are actively working on a new policy for recycling and waste management, which will serve as a legislative foundation for our efforts. This involves formulating laws that guide waste management and an implementation plan and strategy to delineate the roles of each entity, ministry, and authority involved. Second, our approach involves incorporating principles into our policies, such as segregating waste at the source, promoting waste reduction and reuse before recycling. This strategic emphasis aims to minimize the portions of waste that cannot be recycled. Third, we are working on rules and regulations that will serve as guiding frameworks for sectors involved in waste management. The existing fee structure on waste exportation has proven effective in encouraging local recycling. This mechanism ensures that collectors sell their gathered waste to local factories, fostering a sense of trust among investors to contribute to Oman's recycling economy. ✖

Collaborating  
with Ministry  
of Education to  
enhance curricula

Targets net-zero  
emissions by  
**2050**

#### BIO

Abdullah Bin Ali Al Amri holds a BS in geology from Qatar University, a master's in engineering geology and hydrogeology from Moscow University, and a PhD in civil engineering and environmental engineering from University Technology Malaysia. He has several years of experience in project engineering and management, geology and engineering geology, environmental engineering and water and wastewater treatment, and several other areas. His experience includes head of the department of water research and member of the Committee of Municipality Affairs-Dhofar-Sadah, vice chairman of Oman-Abalane Fisheries Management and Development Committee, member of Shura Council, and chairman of the Oman-Belarusian Friendship Committee.



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