

NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENDA GUIDEBOOK: A FORMULA FOR SUCCESS



Center for International Private Enterprise,
an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce



The Center for International Private Enterprise is an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, established in 1983 to promote private enterprise and market-oriented reform worldwide. As a principal participant in the National Endowment for Democracy, CIPE supports strategies and techniques that address market-based democratic development. CIPE also receives support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), as well as private corporations and foundations. Since its inception, CIPE has funded more than 700 projects in 80 countries and has conducted business association management training programs in Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, Eurasia, Latin America, and the Middle East.

National Business Agenda Guidebook

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Key Elements of a National Business Agenda

- Organization of Key National Business Leaders
- Participation by Business and Trade Associations
- Categorization of Participants Into Regional or Industry Focus Groups
- Management of Focus Group Meetings
- Drafting the National Business Agenda
- Consultation and Business Community Feedback
- Revisions to Agenda
- Distribution for Endorsement
- Publication and Presentation
- Communications Strategies

Business associations in many countries have used National Business Agendas to help enact much needed political and economic reforms. Through a National Business Agenda, the private sector can focus public attention on barriers to business development and economic growth and offer solutions that help address the problems of corruption, the informal sector, and over regulation.

INTRODUCTION

A national business agenda is a vital tool for the business community to encourage investment and stimulate business activity and economic growth. Building an agenda mobilizes the business community to use their skills to affect public policy by setting legislative and regulatory priorities and communicating them to policy makers.

National business agendas identify laws and regulations that hinder business activity, and offer concrete recommendations and reforms to remove these barriers and improve the business climate. Developing a national business agenda also educates the private sector on public policies that affect them and allows them to present the concerns of the business community to government officials in a unified voice, increasing the likelihood that their agenda will be adopted. National business agendas have proven to be an effective tool for removing barriers to entrepreneurship in countries across the globe such as Malawi, Nigeria, Paraguay, Peru, Romania, and the United States.

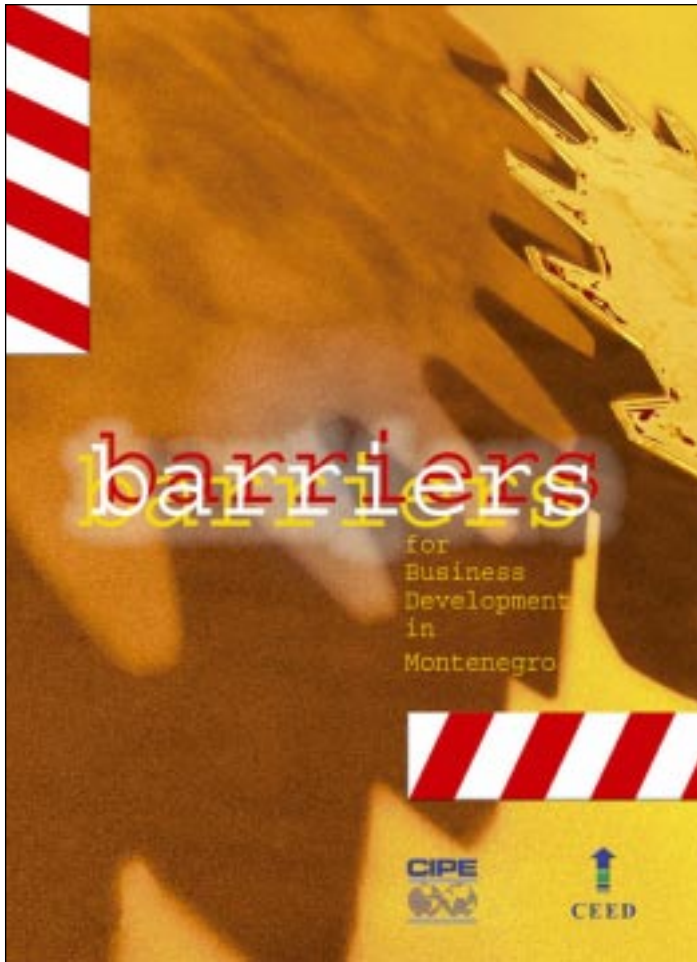
The key to developing any business agenda is to encourage participation by addressing specific regional and industry needs and providing the business community with a sense of ownership in the final product. Business leaders must take the initiative in organizing numerous different business groups and building a coalition that can reach a consensus on major issues.

Freedom of association and the right to petition the government for the redress of grievances are the most basic of democratic institutions, but even in emerging democracies it is still possible to influence changes in policy by building grassroots coalitions and a consensus for change. When business associations come together to promote a core set of market-oriented policies they can become much more effective than if they pursued policy change individually. CIPE developed this guidebook to provide business associations, professional organizations and other interested parties with step-by-step instructions on how to build a national business agenda. ❖



Virtual Business Association (www.cipe.org) - An award winning online source of valuable information for improving business associations and chambers of commerce.

SECTION 1: OUTREACH AND COORDINATION



1.1 Convene Key National Business Leaders

- The key individuals involved in this effort should meet to form an advisory committee that will review the draft agenda and provide comments.

The eventual success of the agenda hinges on significant participation of the business community. The more members of the private sector that endorse the agenda, the more seriously government officials will consider it.

The Center for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development in Podgorica, Montenegro, developed this National Business Agenda to identify barriers to business development and offer solutions. This agenda also analyzed the current finance, employment, and technology development situation of businesses in Montenegro.

- Select a project coordinator.

The project coordinator should be a person who is fully committed to developing a national business agenda and who has well-established management and administrative skills.

- The meeting participants should make a list of private associations from different sectors and regions that might be interested in participating.

Many private entrepreneurs belong to business associations, and contacting association leaders is an effective way to enlist their support.

- Designate specific advisory committee members to contact specific associations by a certain date to gauge their interest in participating and report the results to the project coordinator.

1.2 Contact Business and Trade Associations

- The advisory committee members who agreed to contact business association leaders in step 1.1 should begin to do so.

When they contact these business association leaders, they need to explain the purpose of developing the agenda and the steps involved. It should be made clear that business leaders plan to work together to remove business barriers and thus improve the business climate. Each association's participation is crucial in order for the concerns of their members to be addressed. It should be emphasized that they will have a say in writing and revising the

agenda, and approving the final draft. The endorsed agenda will be presented to the president, key government officials, the public, and the media.

- Business association leaders who agree to participate in the process should be asked if they would also be willing to host a meeting.
- Each advisory committee member should then report back to the project coordinator and indicate which association leaders are willing to participate, and which are willing to host a meeting.❖



SECTION 2: FOCUS GROUPS

What is a Focus Group?

A Focus Group is a committee within a committee. When developing a national business agenda, associations begin by creating a committee to manage the project. In a large association representing a variety of industry sectors and/or regions, it is not practical or efficient for one committee to address all of the disparate interests of their association members. Thus, sub-committees are created, each representing a specific industry sector, region, or issue. These sub-committees focus on a particular area of policy and draft their own sections of the national business agenda. The supervising committee then assembles these sections into a final agenda. Issue specific sub-committees, or Focus Groups, are an essential part of formulating a national business agenda.

2.1 Organize Focus Groups

- Establish focus groups and organize business association leaders into groups based on their type of industry or region.

Each focus group has the same goal, to identify business obstacles and suggest reforms. Dividing business leaders into groups who share similar industry or regional interests subdivides the agenda in a way that allows participants to focus on those areas of particular interest to them and makes the development of the final agenda easier.

Some business association leaders may wish to participate in more than one focus group. This is certainly acceptable and may bolster private sector involvement. Focus groups should, however, be limited in size. Too few participants may mean that the group is not representative of the business community, too many and the meeting is likely to be unfocused and unproductive. The number of focus groups depends on how many business association leaders agree to participate and how many regions or business sectors are represented.

2.2 Select Focus Group Facilitators

- Select a meeting facilitator for each focus group.

The facilitator ensures that the group remains focused on identifying key obstacles to business and proposing solutions. The individual should be a member of the focus group or someone who understands the region or type of business activity in which focus group members are engaged.

- The project coordinator should provide each meeting facilitator with a list of the focus group members and their contact information.❖

SECTION 3: MEETINGS AND VENUE

Focus Group Meeting Checklist

- ✓ Select a meeting date.
- ✓ Select an appropriate location.
- ✓ Draft a meeting agenda.
- ✓ Invite participants and send meeting agenda.
- ✓ Prepare participant list and materials (hand outs, note pads, pens).
- ✓ Provide refreshments for participants.
- ✓ Record obstacles and solutions.

3.1 Dates and Locations

- The project coordinator should set a tentative schedule for all meetings.

Potential dates should be selected for each focus group meeting with enough advance notice to give business association leaders time to plan for the meeting and maximize attendance. The project coordinator should attend each focus group meeting.

- The project coordinator should notify each meeting facilitator of the meeting schedule.
- Each focus group facilitator should select a meeting location for their focus group based on which association leaders agreed to serve as hosts.
- The focus group facilitators should contact the business association leaders in their focus groups and inform them of the date and location for the focus group meeting.

The meeting facilitators should advise business association leaders to poll their members in preparation for the meeting. Association members should be informed of the plan to develop a business agenda and should be asked to identify business obstacles and propose solutions.

- The project coordinator should provide the meeting list to the members of the advisory committee.

3.2 Managing Focus Groups

The goal of each focus group meeting is to obtain a list of reform priorities and proposed solutions that are specific to a particular sector or region.

- The facilitator should begin the meeting by distributing meeting agendas and reminding the participants that objective is to identify obstacles, prioritize them, and propose recommendations for change.
- The facilitator should document each obstacle mentioned.
- Each participant should then list the obstacles in order of priority.
- The facilitator will then identify those items that received the highest priority organized by issue-area.



REFORMS

NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENDA Federation of Egyptian Industries (2000)



Recommended Export System Reforms

Organization:

Bring key export agencies under a single roof, including the Egyptian Export Promotion Center (EEPC), Commercial Representation Offices, Trade Point and Trade Net.

Upgrade the Customs Authority staff training and pay scale.

Regulations:

Eliminate overlapping government ministry and agency roles and adopt a coherent, aggressive operating plan.

The responsible government entity should be required to develop and release economic impact statements for all standards before regulatory mandate is given.

A period of 60 days for open communication should be initiated before regulations are issued, and response to all comments should be mandatory.

An appeals process should be established so that regulations can be challenged in an administrative court system on the basis of need and fairness.

Policies:

Establish one form for all customs export procedures, which will be accepted by the Customs Authority, and the Plant Protection & Quarantine Office, and be an internationally required certificate. Eliminate previous forms and applications.

Automate all customs procedures and establish a network to link the Customs Authority headquarters to its branch offices in all ports.



SECTION 4: DRAFT THE NATIONAL BUSINESS AGENDA AND DISTRIBUTE

- The project coordinator and the advisory committee business leaders should form a task force to synthesize the priority obstacles and proposed recommendations from all focus groups and draft the agenda.
- The introduction to the draft agenda should state in straightforward terms what the agenda is, why it is important, and who participated in drafting it.
- Next, the task force will identify each priority obstacle.

Include the laws or regulations that present a barrier to business, and a description of the issue's important to the private sector.

- Propose specific solutions for each obstacle.

The recommendations should show government officials exactly what needs to

be done to remove a particular obstacle and improve the business climate. Providing policy makers with a convincing and ready-to-implement recommendation increases the possibility that it will be adopted.

- Draft an executive summary.

The executive summary should be the first thing readers see. The executive summary should contain its own very brief introduction and very clearly identify the main obstacles to business and the specific recommended solutions. It should include a short conclusion and be no longer than 4 to 6 pages.

- Draft a table of contents.

- The task force should compile these materials into a draft agenda and give it to the project coordinator. ❖



DRAFT BUSINESS AGENDA

United States Chamber of Commerce Federation (1994) National Business Agenda

Regulatory Reform

Objective: Achieve regulatory relief for business and consumers, and establish institutional reforms to help ensure that future regulations will not be unnecessarily burdensome or harmful.

Problem: Federal regulations are drafted and imposed without due consideration for their ultimate and unintended consequences, in particular how they may interact with other regulatory and economic factors.

Background: Government regulation of private markets, whether good or bad, constitutes indirect taxation on individuals and business. That regulatory burden has been rising dramatically. Businesses are now facing an onslaught of new regulations from recently enacted legislation while regulations already in force have caused unemployment, bankruptcies and harmed the nations competitiveness in the world market. Unchecked, the new regulations will raise prices and limit economic growth. According to the March 1992 issue of the Journal of Regulation and Social Costs, regulation costs businesses and individuals over \$400 billion annually.

Action Needed: Secure regulatory relief through a hold on new regulations and establish a permanent review process for business and consumers.

Chamber Position

Imposing a temporary holding period on the implementation of all new regulations until the economy reaches a targeted growth rate would provide time to review these regulations, and would afford business temporary relief from the onslaught of higher regulatory costs.

The Other Side

A freeze on implementation of new regulations provides little economic benefits and prevents the enforcement of health and safety related regulations.

Outcomes:

- Fewer unnecessary regulations on business.
- Reduced cost of regulatory compliance.
- Increased competitiveness in the global market.

SECTION 5: FEEDBACK AND REVISIONS

5.1 Obtain Community Feedback

- The project coordinator should distribute the draft national business agenda to each participating association for review.

The project coordinator should indicate a deadline for feedback that allows ample time for associations to review the draft with their members and offer comments. Each business association leader should ensure that the association members, or their designated representatives, are given the opportunity to review the draft document and offer feedback.

- Each association leader should synthesize their members' feedback and forward it to the project coordinator by the specified deadline.

5.2 Revise and Distribute Agenda

- The project coordinator and the members of the task force incorporate feedback into the draft agenda.
- The project coordinator should distribute the revised national business agenda to all the participating business association leaders for final review and endorsement.

With the revised national business agenda, the project coordinator should include an endorsement form for each participating business association leader to sign and return to the project coordinator by a certain date. ❖



DRAFT AGENDA

THE OPEN DOORS CAMPAIGN ROMANIA (2000)

Information Technology Sector Agenda

Issue:

Regulations

Policy Recommendation:

Pass an anti-fraud law to ensure fair competition and consumer protection in the field of e-commerce. This law should meet international standards, specifically those established by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Issue:

Taxation

Policy Recommendation:

Reduce the Value-Added-Tax on computers and software from 19% to 5% and the tariffs on computers and software to allow more Romanians the opportunity to access technology for personal and business use.



Tourism Sector Agenda

Issue:

Duplicate Licensing Procedures

Policy Recommendation:

Review the administrative procedures and requirements to license travel agencies, or accommodation structures, and eliminate duplicative procedures.

Issue:

Environmental Regulations

Policy Recommendation:

Pass a law making companies or individuals whose actions foul the environment liable for environmental cleanup, and allocate funds to promote ecological tourism in Romania.

SECTION 6: PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION

6.1 Print the Final Agenda

- The project coordinator should have the final (endorsed) national business agenda printed nicely in booklet format.

6.2 Present the National Business Agenda

- Plan a press conference
- The project advisory committee should set a date to publicly present the agenda to government officials, the media and the general public.
- Select a venue.

Ideally, the event should be held in the capital where the media is concentrated and government officials work. Good venues are inside or in front of the legislature building or the Presidential palace (be sure to seek permission first). Otherwise, a hotel with meeting facilities near the legislature is also appropriate.

- The project coordinator should then write an invitation to the event.

The invitation should briefly indicate why the national business agenda is important, who the presenter will be, when and where the event will be held, and contact information for the project coordinator to RSVP and to provide additional information about the event.

- The project coordinator should then send the invitation along with a copy of the national business agenda and executive summary to all members of the executive and legislative branches and key government officials.

The advisory committee should personally contact key government officials to arrange meetings to discuss the agenda and to encourage them to attend the event.

Report Checklist

✓ Executive Summary

It should also be printed separately as a stand-alone document for ease of distribution.

✓ Table of Contents

This will help the reader easily navigate through the national business agenda.

✓ Introduction

The introduction should state what the agenda is, why it is important, who participated in drafting it, and who endorsed it.

✓ Chapters

Each chapter should be divided by business sector or region, and include a description of specific obstacles and proposed policy recommendations. Each chapter should also include the contact information of the focus group facilitator and a list of the focus group members.

- The task force should write a press release announcing the event and distribute the executive summary to journalists in television, radio and newspaper outlets.

The press release and executive summary sent to journalists should be embargoed until the date of the event. This means that reporters cannot write about the contents of the agenda until the date of the event. An alternative to this is to give one newspaper an exclusive of the agenda prior to the event and only send them the agenda.

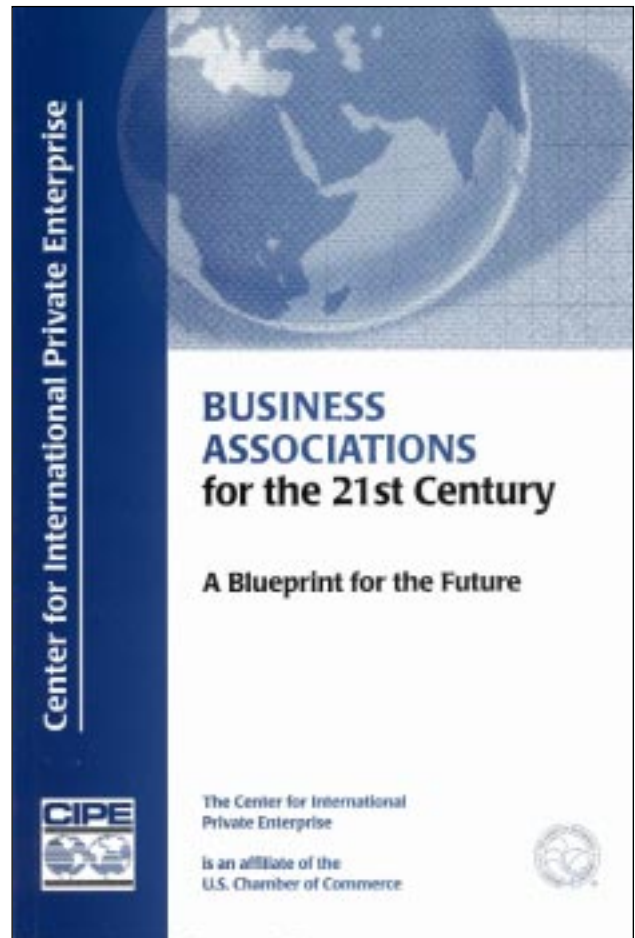
Presentation Checklist

- ✓ Send copies of the final National Business Agenda to all the participants.
- ✓ Send copies to government officials and ask to schedule a meeting to discuss it.
- ✓ Send copies to media outlets and embargo until date of press conference.

Prepare a press conference

- ✓ Select a date and time.
 - ✓ Select a venue.
 - ✓ Prepare materials (copies of the Agenda and Executive Summary).
 - ✓ Notify presenter of event details.
 - ✓ Invite media and other interested parties.
-
- The project committee should send the invitation and the press release to the business association leaders and ask them to extend the invitation to their members.
 - The advisory committee should select one of its members to present the national business agenda to the president (if available).

During the press conference the presenter should discuss what the national business agenda is, why the national business agenda is important to the private sector and to the country's economic well-being, how many associations participated in drafting the national business agenda and endorsed it. The national business agenda can be presented to the head of state in a public event. This must be arranged with his or her staff. If for any reason it is not feasible to present the national business agenda to the chief executive, it could be delivered to the appropriate ministers and senior executive staff. ❖



APPENDIX

GUIDELINES ON HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE PRESS RELEASE

One of the most effective ways to accomplish political and economic reforms is by educating the general public on your key issues—swaying public opinion until a broad consensus for reform can be established. The easiest and least costly method for doing this is by using existing print and broadcast media resources. However, in order to use these resources efficiently, it is necessary to establish clear lines of communication between your organization and those journalists who cover your issues. One method of reaching out to these journalists is through a press release.

Press Releases

Press releases are the most common way to get your message out to journalists. However, in order to be effective they must also follow specific guidelines. These guidelines are intended to make your press release stand out from competing news stories so that journalists are more apt to read your news release. The key elements of a good press release are:

Clarity. Certain key facts must be immediately apparent to a journalist viewing your press release. The name of your organization and your logo should be at the top of the release. The release date must also be at the top, along with the name and phone number of the contact person. The press release must also have a clear title that briefly describes the content of the release. Reporters will not read your materials if the content is not immediately discernable.

Brevity. Press Releases should rarely be more than one page and they should be double-spaced (although you may use single spaces if it helps you keep the release to one page). There is a natural inclination to include all of your information in a press release. It is important to prioritize and only include the most essential information. The purpose of the release is to provide salient information and encourage reporters to contact you for additional details.

Details. Determining what key information to include can be difficult. A good rule to follow is: What is it you are trying to say? Who are you? Where did this take place? When did it happen? Why is this important? You may not need to answer all of these questions, but you should go through the exercise just to make sure you do not miss anything. Answer each question as briefly as possible using only the most essential information.

Format. In addition to the above guidelines, a press release should follow a standard format. Whenever possible, add a short and relevant quote in the first or second paragraph from a leader in the community or an organization member involved in the issue. The last paragraph should be used to provide a short description of the organization. Finally, you should conclude the press release with a symbol that indicates to reporters that there are no additional pages of information. In the United States we typically use —30—, or # # # to identify the end of a release.

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

**Center for
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Enterprise**



MEDIA ADVISORY

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1155 15th St., NW, Suite 700
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202/721-9250 (fax)
WWW.CIPE.ORG**

For Immediate Release
November 19, 2001

Contact:
Jorge Amselle
(202) 721-9225

Serbian Bureaucracy Threatens Democratic Reform

Washington, D.C. - The Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) together with the G-17 Institute in Belgrade will conduct an in-depth study of the informal business sector in Serbia and the punitive tax and regulatory red tape that drive its growth. Already, Serbia's informal sector accounts for as much as 50 percent of that country's GDP.

"The high cost of excessive regulation drives legitimate entrepreneurs underground into the informal sector, removing them as stakeholders in promoting economic and political reform in Serbia and weakening confidence in democratic governance," said Dr. Kim R. Holmes, Vice President at the Heritage Foundation and CIPE Board Member.

CIPE and the G-17 Institute will conduct an extensive survey of Serbian businesses and host a conference to discuss and publicize its findings. The project will highlight the true cost of government intervention in the market and its effect on driving the informal sector and will increase public awareness of this problem in order to build a national agenda for political change.

This project is made possible through a grant from the National Endowment for Democracy. CIPE has supported more than 700 local initiatives in over 80 developing countries, involving the private sector in policy advocacy, institutional reform, improving governance, and building understanding of market-based democratic systems. CIPE is a non-profit affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

ISOÑ

Events. If a press release is being used to announce an event it should be sent in the form of an invitation. However, unlike an invitation you would send to your members, a press invitation needs to contain some of the same details as a press release. This invitation should contain your name and logo at the top, followed by; "You are cordially invited to attend ... " or " (name of important person) invites you to attend..." This should

be followed by the title or name of the event in large letters as well as the date, time and place where the event will be held. A single paragraph, single-spaced, should then be devoted to identifying the name and title of the guest speaker and a brief explanation of why this event is important. At the end of the press release add the appropriate contact information and the RSVP (Répondez S'il Vous Plait – Please Respond).

A Note on Distribution. In distributing press releases you should try and address them to specific journalists by name. For an event, send the announcement again the week of the event as a reminder. Don't be afraid to call journalists and bring their attention to your release. Make sure you send your releases to both print and broadcast resources. Over time, you will be able to establish relationships with those journalists who regularly cover your issues they will come to rely on you as a resource for information.

Paid Media: In most circumstances it is best to use the free services of reporters (earned media) to distribute information about activities and events. Free, or earned media, is one of the most effective methods of influencing public opinion. However, using paid media—paying to place advertisements in news sources or producing your own news sources—may occasionally be called for. Some reporters in different countries may, in fact, expect payment to print a story. This type of “checkbook journalism” is not an acceptable journalistic practice and should be avoided. ❖

SAMPLE EVENT INVITATION

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The Center for International Private Enterprise

Cordially invites you to

**Islam, Democracy and Market Economy:
A Dialogue**

Wednesday, November 7, 2001

9:00 — 11:00 a.m.

**1155 15th Street, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005**

For countries of the Middle East and others sharing Islamic cultural values, progress in a newly globalized economy seems to demand both democracy and a market economy. Do the tenets of Islam provide support for the basic components of a democratic society, and by extension a market economy? Or is Islam inherently incompatible with these institutions? For 15 years, the Center for International Private Enterprise, an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and a principal participant in the National Endowment for Democracy, and its worldwide partners have been struggling with these questions.

Ozdem Sanberk, director of the Istanbul-based Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) and former undersecretary at the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be in Washington, DC on November 7th from 9:00 — 11:00 a.m. (Eastern Standard Time) to discuss why and how democracy and market economy are the paths to development in the Islamic world.

CIPE has invited its partners from Asia, Central and Eastern Europe/Eurasia and Africa to join the dialogue via an internet conference.

Please contact Jorge Amselle via email jamselle@cipe.org or fax at 202/721-9250 to RSVP by November 6, 2001.

/ No, I will not attend, but keep me in mind for future programs.

/ **Yes, I will attend.**

Name: _____ Email: _____

Organization: _____ Phone No: _____

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