

PRESS DISCLOSURE

** For immediate release **



Tunisia competition study pinpoints focus areas for policy and enforcement rethink to level playing field in economy increasingly dominated by conglomerates

Paris, 1 APRIL 2022 – The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development today launched the report *OECD Peer Reviews of Competition Law and Policy: Tunisia** at an event held under the auspices of the office of Tunisian Prime Minister Najla Bouden.

The peer review, supported by the Delegation of the European Union in Tunisia, was requested by the government of Tunisia and is part of a broader project to examine the current state of the country's competition policy framework and its enforcement practices, and to support competitive reforms in the country, in which market power in key industries is heavily concentrated.

Tunisia was among the first countries in Africa and the Middle East to adopt a competition law. The law applies across the board to all industries, but exempts the insurance, banking, audio-visual media and microfinance sectors from its provisions in certain key respects, derogating responsibilities in these areas to sector regulators. It also exempts price controls over several products – including food and energy – from competition enforcement, and divides enforcement responsibilities between two bodies – the competition department of the Ministry of Trade and the Competition Council, complicating the enforcement landscape.

Despite pro-competitive developments brought about by a number of changes in competition policy since the law's implementation three decades ago, the review makes a number of recommendations that could further strengthen the country's competition regime in an economy increasingly dominated by conglomerates.

The President of the OECD's Competition Committee, Frédéric Jenny, said: "The OECD's peer review process has once again demonstrated its value in producing solid, actionable recommendations to enable Tunisia to boost competition in its economy, which has the potential to contribute significantly to growth and development that benefits ordinary Tunisians. The importance of pro-competitive policy cannot be understated, and we are proud to be part of efforts to ensure its implementation and success."

Francisco Acosta Soto, the European Union's Deputy Head of Delegation to Tunisia, said: "Tunisia has long been an outlier on the African continent, with a relatively sophisticated economy and a high level of development, despite certain market distortions. This competition review by the OECD, supported by the European Union, puts a number of competitive constraints in the spotlight whose removal will lead to better outcomes across

the economy as businesses take advantage of a more level playing field, small enterprises enjoy greater scope to scale up, and jobs and growth follow.”

Commenting on the findings of the review, Competition Council Vice President Fathia Hamed said: “We welcome the detailed analysis of Tunisia’s competition landscape that the OECD’s peer review has provided us with, and we equally welcome the review’s recommendations for carefully targeted policy reforms to tackle competition issues holding our economy back from achieving its full potential. We look forward to working with our colleagues in other branches of government to address these shared challenges that affect all Tunisians, and to helping foster a more competitive business environment in which initiative and resourcefulness are rewarded, costs to Tunisian consumers are lowered, and commercial opportunities created.”

Minister of Trade and Export Development Fadhila Rabhi said: “As a nation with considerable economic potential, Tunisia is privileged to be part of such a thorough study of one of the most fundamental underpinnings of our economy as the OECD has presented in its competition policy review. A policy diagnosis such as this review offers a valuable means of getting directly to the heart of an issue that concerns the interests of both the economy and society at large as we embrace the need to inject additional vitality into our industries, ensuring that vested interests are subject to the bracing forces of free competition and that economic participation is open to all.”

***About OECD Peer Reviews of Competition Law and Policy**

OECD Competition Peer Reviews of Competition Law and Policy are a valuable tool to help policymakers in OECD member countries and non-member countries alike to assess the need to reform and strengthen their competition frameworks. Reviews are compiled in a two-stage process: first, a report is produced by the OECD Secretariat on the current state of the country’s competition framework and its enforcement practice; and second, a peer review based on the report is conducted by either the OECD’s Competition Committee or the OECD Global Forum on Competition.

The reviewers leading the review process for Tunisia were Jacques Steenbergen (Belgium), Matthew Boswell (Canada), Francis Kariuki (Kenya) and Reiko Aoki (Japan). The delegation representing Tunisia during the peer review sessions was led by Minister of Commerce and Export Development Fadhila Rabhi and Competition Council President Ridha Ben Mahmoud. The *OECD Peer Reviews of Competition Law and Policy: Tunisia* report was prepared by Paulo Burnier, Saïd Kechida and Gaetano Lapenta of the OECD’s Competition Division. The peer review process was extensively supported by Fathia Hamed and Mohamed Cheikhrouhou of the Competition Council and Fadhila Rabhi and Nawal Khaldi of the Ministry of Commerce.

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OECD Peer Reviews of Competition Law and Policy: Tunisia

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