

# Day 1

## Innovation and technological advancements – Opportunity spotlights

### ■ Introduction

The opportunity spotlight on technology and innovation seeks to explore the transformative role that technology plays in driving innovation and fostering sustainable growth among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Arab region. In an era where technological advancements are rapidly reshaping industries, SMEs must harness these innovations to remain competitive and responsive to market demands. This 30-minute panel will highlight opportunities for SMEs to access funding, support and resources that facilitate technological adoption and innovation.

Participants will gain insights into the latest trends in technology, discover available support mechanisms, and learn from successful initiatives that have enabled SMEs to leverage innovation for growth. The session aims to inspire entrepreneurs to embrace technology as a critical enabler of their business strategies.

### ■ Moderator

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**Rana Nawas**, Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of When Women Win, Great Britain/Lebanon/State of Palestine

#### Speakers

- **Nasser Al Qahtani**, Executive Director of the Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND), Saudi Arabia
- **AbdulRahman Mohammed Al Shafi**, Director of National Cyber Strategies Department, National Cyber Security Agency, Qatar
- **Dr. Hashim Hussein**, Head of UNIDO Investment and Technology Promotion Office in the Kingdom of Bahrain (ITPO Bahrain) and International Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (ICEI), Bahrain

## ▪ Thematic focus

The opportunity spotlight on technology and innovation will delve into critical pathways for SMEs to integrate technology and foster innovation in their operations. Attendees will gain practical knowledge and actionable strategies to navigate the unique challenges and opportunities in today's digital landscape.

Key themes for discussion include:

- **Access to funding for innovation:** This theme will explore the various funding mechanisms available to SMEs for technological adoption, including grants, loans and investment opportunities. Panelists will discuss the criteria for securing funding and share insights on effective pitching strategies for technology-focused projects.
- **Support for technology adoption:** The panel will highlight initiatives and support programmes aimed at assisting SMEs in integrating technology into their business models. This includes mentorship programmes, training workshops, and resources that facilitate the implementation of innovative solutions.
- **Fostering a culture of innovation:** Speakers will discuss best practices for creating an organizational culture that embraces innovation. This theme will cover strategies for encouraging creative thinking, collaboration, and agility within SMEs to adapt to technological advancements.