

THE GLOBAL DIWAN'S

Newsletter

CONNECTING
EAST-WEST AND
SOUTH LEADERS



Paris, June 30, 2025.

HH Fahad Al Ruwaily Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Paris, Ambassador François Gouyette, Yam Attalah - Franklin Law Firm

EDITORIAL

The Global Diwan values

2025 has undoubtedly confirmed the current situation : we live from now on in an uncertain and fragmented world.

Our original motto in 2020 was «connecting East and West leaders» When we sincerely hoped to build a constructive dialogue between Europe on one side (including of course the UK leaving the EU) and MENA countries on the other (ie. The Middle East to name the GCC countries at a time of the blockade against Qatar, and also North Africa too with long lasting neighboring post-colonial uncertainty.

Returning recently from the Doha forum (December 2024), I became fully aware of the necessary extension of our geographical scope to Asia Pacific countries and leaders. - But not exactly the Global South...

The reason why we started to liaise our platform with the Asian Network (around ASEAN stakeholders) and Women in Tech India as explained in this current newsletter read now by more than 5000 subscribers. The next Global Diwan forum (III) will be held in Riyadh (KSA) to adapt to the central

point of balance of our dynamic initiative after Nice (I) and Monaco (II). We still work on healthcare topics with the support of Eurazeo and The Diwan.

www.eurazeo.com
www.the-diwan.com

The Global Diwan is proudly supporting, with well established lawyers in Paris two foundational values : the rule of law interconnected with citizen rights
The certainty of law underpins justice, equality and protection Citizen rights provide a progressive compass to set standards still universal and goals to be reached through the empowerment of global young leaders from West, East and South!

Enjoy your reading.
Welcome to our next events in Paris, Riyadh and soon in Geneva (2026)...

Éric Schell 
CEO of The Global Diwan

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Why The Global Diwan Is Expanding to Southeast Asia

REVIVING THE ROUTES OF SINDBAD:
A STRATEGIC RETURN TO THE INDIAN OCEAN

Othman El Kachtoul 
Diplomat and islamologist



Singapore, the ASEAN seat 

IN THE LEGENDARY TALES OF *ONE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS*, SINDBAD THE SAILOR DEPARTS FROM BASRA AND VENTURES ACROSS THE INDIAN OCEAN, REACHING THE SHORES OF INDIA, THE MALAY ARCHIPELAGO, AND CHINA. THOUGH MYTHICAL, SINDBAD REFLECTS A DEEPER HISTORICAL REALITY: THAT OF OMANI NAVIGATOR AHMAD IBN MĀJID AND GENERATIONS OF SAILORS WHO, FROM THE 15th CENTURY ONWARD, MAPPED THE MONSOON-DRIVEN ROUTES THAT CONNECTED THE ARAB WORLD TO SOUTHEAST ASIA. THESE MARITIME CORRIDORS TRANSMITTED NOT ONLY GOODS, BUT ALSO IDEAS, LANGUAGES, FAITHS, TECHNOLOGIES, AND FORMS OF COEXISTENCE—TRACES OF WHICH REMAIN VISIBLE TODAY.



These connections are far from obsolete. The Gulf States are major investors in Southeast Asia, financing infrastructure, renewable energy, and Islamic finance projects—especially in Malaysia and Indonesia. Conversely, Southeast Asian countries export manufactured goods, digital solutions, and human capital—skilled and semi-skilled workers—to the Middle East, shaping the urban and economic landscapes of cities like Dubai and Doha. Academic partnerships are also growing, as students, researchers, and institutions move between the two regions in increasing numbers.

The religious and cultural bonds are equally significant. Countries like Indonesia and Malaysia maintain longstanding spiritual ties with Mecca, Medina and Al-Azhar. Cooperation in fields such as halal certification, religious education, and counter-extremism has become institutionalized, and the broader sense of belonging to a transnational Muslim community continues to influence political, social, and economic agendas on both sides.

In the current Indo-Pacific context, these relations take on added strategic weight. Both regions face common structural challenges—climate change, energy transition, food security, and youth unemployment—and offer complementary capacities to address them. What once flowed through dhows and trade winds now circulates via fibre-optic cables, digital platforms, and investment pipelines. Sindbad's journey thus becomes a lens through which to view a relationship that is not only enduring but evolving in new, complex ways.

It is within this landscape that *The Global Diwan* has chosen to expand its scope to

Southeast Asia. This decision is not so much a shift in focus as an extension of a broader effort to facilitate dialogue between regions historically connected but often institutionally disconnected. Rather than presenting itself as a central actor, *The Global Diwan* hopes to contribute to a growing ecosystem of platforms that promote exchange across sectors—economic, academic, cultural—in a context where traditional channels often reach their limits.

This expansion also reflects a particular geopolitical moment. The renewed tensions between India and Pakistan—two nuclear-armed neighbours entrenched in historical rivalry—add a layer of instability to a region already marked by strategic competition and nationalism. In such an environment, informal spaces for dialogue, insulated from the constraints of official diplomacy, become increasingly valuable—not to resolve conflicts directly, but to maintain a fabric of communication and cooperation that might otherwise fray.

The Global Diwan's engagement in Southeast Asia is therefore less about exporting a model than about participating in existing conversations—amplifying under-explored linkages, connecting actors, and facilitating mutual understanding. The approach is pragmatic: building thematic forums, supporting academic collaboration, and encouraging exchange among young professionals and entrepreneurs who will shape tomorrow's trans-regional partnerships.

For French and European business actors, this development holds particular relevance:

- **1. Market Access through Regional Gateways:** Southeast Asia's economic

dynamism, demographic growth, and commitment to digital innovation make it an increasingly attractive partner. The strengthening of Gulf-ASEAN ties opens additional doors for European firms, particularly in sectors like fintech, green energy, and higher education.

- **2. Strategic Diversification:** As Europe recalibrates its Asia strategy beyond a China-centric framework, Southeast Asia offers a balanced and multipolar alternative. Engaging through multilateral or Gulf-aligned platforms allows for diversified partnerships less exposed to great power tensions.
- **3. Anticipation and Risk Mitigation:** In a world of volatile supply chains and shifting regulatory landscapes, access to regional insight and informal dialogue is key. Forums such as *The Global Diwan* offer European actors an additional vantage point from which to interpret developments and reduce exposure to uncertainty.

With a history of connecting the Mediterranean, the Arab world, and Africa, *The Global Diwan's* step toward Southeast Asia aligns with broader efforts to foster cross-regional cooperation in an increasingly fragmented world. It does not aim to occupy the centre stage, but to contribute—modestly and constructively—to a space of exchange that many actors now recognise as both timely and necessary.

Ultimately, it is the spirit of Sindbad—curious, adaptable, open to the world—that offers the most appropriate metaphor: not for grand designs, but for patient navigation across shifting tides.



THE GLOBAL DIWAN X THE ASIAN NETWORK



Founded at the end of 2020 by Mr. Ngo Ravindra, The Asian Network is a dynamic and inspirational community of the region's most promising leaders. Our members come from diverse cultural, national, and professional backgrounds, including government, civil society, academia, and social enterprise. Many of our speakers and members have received prestigious recognitions such as inclusion in the Forbes Under 30 List, TEDx speaker invitations, United Nations awards, Asia Society Fellowships, and selection as Young Global Leaders by the World Economic Forum, with a primary focus on the ASEAN region.

Since our inception, we have been hosting and organizing high-level online discussions, leadership conferences, and private roundtable meetings on critical topics such as climate action, gender equality, and peacebuilding, all aligned with advancing the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

In a strategic move to expand our global reach, The Asian Network has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with The Global Diwan. Founded in 2020 by Mr. Eric Schell, The Global Diwan is a unique Euro-Arab networking platform dedicated to fostering connections between East, West, and South. Its mission is to bridge global leaders and cultivate opportunities for the next generation, driving positive change in business and society. By acting as a catalyst for transformation and growth, The Global Diwan strengthens collaborations between Europe, the MENA region, and now, thanks to this new partnership, Asian countries.

This collaboration unites key stakeholders, including startups, investors, SMEs, governments, international organizations, media professionals, academics, and civil society representatives. The signing of this MoU marks a commitment to fostering cross-continental cooperation, merging The Asian Network's regional expertise with The Global Diwan's expansive reach.

Together, we aim to create synergies that empower our members, promote knowledge exchange, and drive collaborative projects addressing global challenges.

The first initiative under this partnership is an upcoming webinar on May 22, 2025, focused on a crucial and transformative topic: Health and Digital Adoption. This event will explore how technology is revolutionizing healthcare, enhancing patient outcomes, and fostering innovation in the healthcare sector. We will address key questions about the digital revolution's impact on healthcare delivery and the future of digital health technologies worldwide.

This webinar is part of a broader series leading up to The Global Diwan's Third Annual Forum in November 2025. The conference, held in the South of France, will spotlight health security, biotech, and medtech advancements. It will offer high-quality networking opportunities, brand visibility, and prestigious speaking engagements, including roundtables and keynote speeches. The Asian Network is proud to support this significant conference and looks forward to contributing to its success.



THE ASIAN NETWORK
LEADERS FOR A BETTER WORLD

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SCAN ME

HEALTH WEBINAR SERIES



MAY 22, 2025

10:00 AM - PARIS TIME

12:00 PM - DUBAI TIME

4:00 PM - SINGAPORE TIME



BERTRAND DE LAVENNE

VICE PRESIDENT
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THE GLOBAL DIWAN



ANDA SAPARDAN

RABU BIRU
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CHARLES BARK

FOUNDER HI NOUNOU
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DR. MANISH CHAND

ROBOTIC SURGEON
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AMORNTHPEP (SANJU) SACHAMUNEEWONGSE

FOUNDER SATI APP
THAILAND



SURAYA TURK

LAWYER & DIRECTOR
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THE GLOBAL DIWAN HEALTHCARE

The Vital Importance of Collaboration between Europe, MENA, and ASEAN in the Healthcare Ecosystem



Bertrand de Lavenne 

BUILDING BRIDGES TOWARDS A HEALTHIER GLOBAL FUTURE

The world stands at the crossroads of unprecedented healthcare challenges and opportunities. From pandemics that traverse continents to technological breakthroughs that promise to transform patient care, the need for cohesive international collaboration has never been more apparent. Nowhere is this more urgent than in the thriving and diverse regions of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). These regions, each with their distinct strengths, histories, and healthcare infrastructures, hold immense potential when their expertise and resources are fused. The manifold reasons collaboration between Europe, MENA, and ASEAN is not just beneficial but essential for the advancement of the global healthcare ecosystem, and The Global Diwan Healthcare wants to play its role.

THE CASE FOR CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATION

Modern healthcare is a complex, interconnected web of innovations, policies, and populations. The challenges we face—ranging from emerging infectious diseases to the burden of chronic illnesses—do not respect borders. Instead, they demand solutions born of diversity, adaptability, and shared wisdom.

- **Shared Health Threats:** The COVID-19 pandemic offers sobering evidence of how rapidly health emergencies can escalate globally. Viruses do not recognize political boundaries, making joint surveillance, communication, and rapid response vital.
- **Resource Disparities:** While Europe often sets global standards in research and innovation, many MENA and ASEAN nations offer unique demographic perspectives, rapid population growth, and localized expertise. Collaboration can help bridge resource and knowledge gaps, lifting healthcare standards for all.

- **Innovation and Technology Transfer:** Europe's leadership in medical research and digital health, MENA's growing investment in healthcare infrastructure, and ASEAN's agility in adopting new technologies create a potent mix for innovation when pooled.

Europe: A Powerhouse of Healthcare Innovation

Europe boasts some of the world's leading research institutions, pharmaceutical industries, and healthcare policies. European nations have pioneered universal health coverage, patient safety protocols, and medical education. This tradition of excellence is an invaluable asset to partners seeking to modernize or expand their healthcare systems. Additionally, Europe's emphasis on data privacy, ethical standards, and evidence-based policymaking sets a benchmark for collaborative projects.

MENA: A Region in Transformation

The Middle East and North Africa region is undergoing profound transformation. Population booms, urbanization, and government-led visions for diversified economies—such as Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030—are driving massive investments in healthcare. MENA countries are building world-class medical cities, championing digital health, and fostering public-private partnerships. However, the region also grapples with health disparities, access issues, and a high prevalence of non-communicable diseases. Collaborative efforts with Europe and ASEAN can catalyse the development and adaptation of innovative care models suited to the region's unique context.

ASEAN: Agile, Diverse, and Rapidly Advancing

ASEAN's ten member states represent over 650 million people and encompass a remarkable diversity of cultures, economies, and healthcare systems. The region has shown remarkable agility in responding to health crises and adopting new technologies, such as mobile health and telemedicine. ASEAN's experience in managing infectious diseases like SARS and dengue fever,

combined with its youthful population, make it a dynamic partner for joint healthcare ventures.

Bold, effective collaboration between Europe, MENA, and ASEAN can unlock transformative opportunities in the following domains:

1. Disease Surveillance and Response

Building integrated disease surveillance networks across regions ensures early detection of outbreaks and swift mobilization of resources. Shared databases, aligned protocols, and cross-border training can greatly enhance preparedness and minimize the impact of epidemics.

2. Research and Development

Pooling research capabilities accelerates the discovery of new medicines, vaccines, and diagnostic tools. Joint clinical trials, data sharing agreements, and funding partnerships increase the likelihood of breakthroughs that benefit all populations.

3. Digital Health and Telemedicine

Digital health technologies transcend geographic limitations. Collaborative development and standardization of telemedicine platforms, electronic health records, and AI-driven diagnostics help increase access to quality care, especially in remote or underserved areas.

4. Health Workforce Training and Exchange

Inter-regional exchange programs for healthcare professionals foster mutual learning and help standardize best practices. Europe's experience in specialist training, for instance, can be adapted to the rapidly growing medical education sectors in MENA and ASEAN.

5. Policy Development and Health System Strengthening

Collaboration enables the sharing of policy blueprints—such as Europe's universal health coverage frameworks or ASEAN's community-based care approaches—that can be tailored to regional realities.

6. Fundraising and Support for Healthcare Start-Ups

One of the most dynamic aspects of the healthcare ecosystem is the emergence of innovative start-ups. Securing sufficient funding is often the primary hurdle for these ventures, especially when scaling up solutions that address local and global health challenges. Cross-regional collaboration facilitates access to a broader pool of investors, venture capitalists, and public-private funding mechanisms.

- **Access to Diverse Funding Sources:** By tapping into the varied investment landscapes of Europe, MENA, and ASEAN, healthcare start-ups can secure the capital required for research, clinical trials, and market entry.
- **Incubators and Accelerators:** Jointly established incubators and accelerator programs foster innovation by providing start-ups mentorship, infrastructure, and early-stage funding across continents.
- **Showcasing Innovations:** Multi-regional conferences, pitch competitions, and healthcare summits allow entrepreneurs to present their solutions to a global audience, increasing visibility and fundraising potential.
- **Regulatory Guidance:** Access to mentors experienced in navigating various regulatory environments helps start-ups become investment-ready and compliant across multiple markets.

CASE STUDIES IN SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

The seeds of collaboration are already yielding fruit. A few shining examples include:

- **EU-ASEAN Health Dialogues:** These forums facilitate joint policy formulation, pandemic response coordination, and digital health initiatives. They exemplify how regular dialogue builds trust and mutual understanding.
- **MENA-Europe Vaccine Partnerships:** Several MENA countries have participated in European-led vaccine trials and benefited from technology transfer agreements, speeding up immunization drives during COVID-19.
- **Cross-Regional Medical Education:** Academic partnerships between European universities and medical schools in MENA and ASEAN have led to the creation of cutting-edge training programs and research centers.
- **Multi-Regional Start-up Accelerators:** Recent years have seen the growth of cross-border healthcare incubators and investment networks, such as Europe-MENA-ASEAN pitch events and grant programs, which have enabled start-ups to raise funds and develop scalable solutions for global health needs.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO COLLABORATION

Despite the promise, collaboration is not without its hurdles. Differences in regulatory frameworks, data privacy laws, funding mechanisms, and language can impede progress. Political instability or divergent national priorities may also slow joint efforts. However, these challenges can be overcome with strong leadership, harmonized standards, and dedicated platforms for dialogue. Multilateral organizations, such as the World Health Organization and the World Bank, play a critical role in mediating and supporting these partnerships.

At The Global Diwan Healthcare, we will continue to support by establishing regular forums and working groups for sustained dialogue, by promoting the mutual recognition of medical qualifications and standards, by fostering public-private partnerships to leverage investment and innovation, by engaging civil society and patient groups to ensure policies reflect diverse needs and by supporting international fundraising platforms and create dedicated grant opportunities for healthcare start-ups with cross-regional impact.

CONCLUSION

The future of healthcare is global. As Europe, MENA, and ASEAN face increasingly complex and shared health challenges, the imperative for collaboration grows. By pooling strengths, sharing knowledge, and building bridges across continents—while also nurturing the next generation of healthcare innovators through enhanced fundraising and investment—these three regions can not only uplift the health and well-being of their own populations but also set a standard for international cooperation in the 21st century. Let us embrace this opportunity, not as a choice, but as a necessity for a healthier, more equitable world.

THE GLOBAL DIWAN HEALTHCARE

FOLLOWING OUR FIRST HEALTH WEBINAR AT THE END OF MAY, THE GLOBAL DIWAN EXPLORES THE LATEST TRENDS IN LIFE SCIENCES IN MORE DETAIL. IN THIS ISSUE, MANISH CHAND (A WEBINAR SPEAKER) SUMMARIZES HOW “TECHNOLOGY IS EVOLVING AT A RAPID PACE IN THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR, BUT IS LAGGING BEHIND MANY OTHER SECTORS IN THIS REGARD.” MOVING FROM TECHNOLOGY TO HUMANS, AS AWARENESS OF MENTAL HEALTHCARE GROWS WORLDWIDE, PHILIPPE AUBY INTRODUCES THE CONCEPT OF NEURODIVERSITY, MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER DUE TO EVOLVING VALUES RELATED TO INCLUSION, INNOVATION, AND MENTAL HEALTH, AND GIVEN THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND MULTICULTURALISM OF OUR WORLD.

Technology is moving at a rapid pace



Dr. Manish Chand 

(Robotic Cancer Surgeon | Professor of Surgery)

From mobile computing to artificial intelligence to quantum machine learning models, there seems to be no limit to our imagination and that of engineers and computer scientists who keep pushing the boundaries further and further. In the UK, it won't be long until self-driving cars are being tested on the streets of London. Indeed we have all seen first-hand how our lives have been overwhelmed with the addiction to technology both socially and professionally. We don't just use technology, we live it!

Healthcare, however, has lagged behind many other industries in this respect. We have not seen the adoption that has driven forward gaming, entertainment and even banking and automobiles. But there may be important reasons for this rather than healthcare just being a laggard. Healthcare has often been considered one of slow, horizontal thinking rather than bold vertical moves. This means we are more likely to go from 1.1 to 1.2 rather than leap from 1 to 2. Horizontal thinking shows evolution of ideas and has no set speed of change. Conversely, vertical thinking shows revolution and a rapid change of the status quo with true disruption of existing ideas. Perhaps the currency of health is too precious to risk complete disruption? Or with an increasing and aging population and limited resources, do we need to be more visionary in our approach?

We recently held a global webinar featuring analysts from different specialties within the healthcare industry. This included regulatory, legal, clinical and entrepreneurial. One of the resounding themes was that of 'implementation challenges'. It is all well and good to build innovative products and solutions, but unless they are effectively implemented they simply join the myriad of 'good ideas' which

remain on the shelf generating zero impact. At the heart of this issue lies cultural resistance – “we have always done it this way”. This mindset must change. We must be open to new practices and new approaches all whilst protecting patients from unnecessary risk. For successful implementation that makes a meaningful clinical difference to patient outcomes will lead to huge improvement in the health of the nation.

Technology can improve healthcare in many different aspects. In my lab we are developing technologies using such methods to rapidly detect cancer, provide quality assurance treatments have been as optimal as possible that is all set at the time of surgery, and decision support tools which mean that surgical errors during procedures are eliminated—surgical error remains one of the biggest causes inpatient mortality even in this day and age.

Another challenge is the conundrum of 'data'. The umbrella of artificial intelligence includes data analysis that will improve efficiency and ultimately save resources in the longer term, but there are also opportunities to develop new innovative technologies that may better predict diagnose and treat common conditions including cancer, disease diabetes amongst the biggest killers patients. Many modern technological advances rely on great swathes of data, and that data to be organised in a way that can be analysed and reproduced so that patterns may be identified to allow predicting behaviour and outcomes. This is conventionally now known as big data analysis which involves training and testing machine learning algorithms. But the challenge doesn't end there. Even if one can collect sufficiently large quantities of data which can be packaged into meaningful units

capable of creating accurate algorithms, there is the contentious issues of data protection and confidentiality. For these algorithms to be accurate, data must be sufficient large to incorporate all outcomes and that means sharing personal data and confidential data which has proved to be problematic from an ethical standpoint. I would suspect that these matters will be overcome in time but we must consider what the potential pitfalls are. Selling our confidential data to large corporations that have the ultimate aim to produce profit to their shareholders is understandably considered sinister. After all, most successful corporations do not exist to solely improve society despite often having clichéd sounding mission statements.

Technology when implemented properly drives up the standards for everyone, and in particular the end-user of any service. If we take the example of a nascent technology which could be universally implemented for monitoring pregnancies, we would see a global drop in maternal and newborn deaths. If we add in, training of medical staff through technology to eliminate huge variations we would further improve outcomes.

Paradoxically, it is developing countries who have most to gain from technology adoption with huge deltas compared to the more marginal gains in developed countries. Analysing large sets of data but also most likely efficiency as well as resource allocation in a time when money is constrained. Administrative tasks that can often take an inordinate amount of time will be reduced allowing clinical staff to concentrate and direction flexibility and ease-of-use and improve patient unable to be more involved in their care therefore make these decisions more personalised and convenient. These are just some of the examples of how we can leverage existing technology with the tools that we have.

I look forward to further discussing these and other health-related challenges later this year in the South of France. In addition to debating these issues, showcasing some of these technologies and starting meaningful conversations of how we can implement and adopt technology in a rapid manner without compromising our integrity or our ethical stance.

Neurodiversity: an emerging paradigm and a genuine corporate opportunity



Philippe Auby, MD 

Thirty years ago, I had the privilege of meeting Temple Grandin at one of her global conferences in France (<https://www.templegrandin.com>), at a time when she was among the first autistic individuals to share their lived experience publicly. Her talk left a lasting impression on me, one that resonated ever since, inspiring me to recently become a friend of the Neurodiversity Foundation (<https://neurodiversiteit.nl>), an organisation dedicated to embracing and empowering neurodivergent individuals.

“In my work as a designer of livestock handling facilities, I have been working with neurodiverse individuals since the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, most people were not aware of the term “neurodiversity”. When I was designing equipment and working with major corporations, almost nobody knew I was an autistic person. They viewed me as different, but I was recognized for the quality of my work. I learned to sell my work instead of selling myself.”

Temple Grandin, Ph.D. (Foreword of “Neurodiversity, From Phenomenology to Neurobiology and Enhancing Technologies”, edited by Lawrence K. Fung, American Psychiatric Association Publishing, 2021, www.appi.org)

Emerging in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the central idea of neurodiversity offers a new lens for understanding human nature, one that views genetically based neurocognitive and behaviour

differences as natural variations in human functioning, comparable to the diversity found, for instance, in ethnicity or cultural background. Neurodiversity values the natural variation in how human brains function, emphasising that differences such as Autism, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Dyslexia are not deficits, but part of the spectrum of human diversity.

Judy Singer, the Australian sociologist who coined the term “neurodiversity” in the late 1990s, defined it as the “boundless variety of human minds on the planet, in which no two minds can ever be exactly alike. Diversity is a measurement of the degree of variability in a specific location.” Her book chapter, in an academic series on disability, human rights and society, published by the UK Open University Press, was titled: “Why can’t you be normal for once in your life?” She framed the “Neurologically Different” as a new addition to the familiar political categories of class/gender/race. (Judy Singer, 1998, Disability Discourse, Open University Press, UK) She viewed it as a means to unite neurocognitive differences.

Still, Neurodiversity can be a challenging and confusing concept, and the debate over its definition is ongoing, especially about who belongs to the neurodivergent group and who does not. Furthermore, the neurodiversity movement has sparked some controversy.

Among the numerous debates, the first ones related to what could be called the “high functioning bias”. This refers to the tendency to focus on the experiences and voices of people with autism who

are verbal, independent, and often academically or professionally successful. These individuals, eventually diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, were among the first to advocate publicly for acceptance and helped shape the neurodiversity "raise" in the 1990s and 2000s. While their activism brought crucial visibility and challenged harmful stereotypes, it was also perceived to present a narrow image of what it means to be autistic. People with higher support needs, i.e. those who are non-verbal, intellectually disabled, or require constant care, were considered to be left out of the picture. As a result, some families and professionals argued that the movement did not reflect the full spectrum of autism and failed to address the practical challenges of those who cannot self-advocate.

This bias has also shaped public perception. When autism is mainly represented by highly articulate tech workers or creative thinkers, it can lead to a misunderstanding of the condition as simply a "quirky difference," rather than a spectrum that includes profound disability. Some even fear this could have led to reduced funding or attention for those with greater needs.

Today, many neurodiversity advocates are working to broaden the conversation, insisting that inclusion means valuing all forms of communication, recognising diverse support needs, and rejecting the idea that only "successful" neurodivergent people deserve respect or representation.

In this respect, the Neurodiversity Foundation clearly states their slogan: "Neurodiversity means all of us. It's a call to discontinue the "othering" of individuals, and include interpreting everyone, as a person of worth, regarding their unique configurations."

Another sensitive matter is what is considered appropriate or respectful when discussing neurodiversity, which can be surprisingly tricky. Many autistic people prefer to consider themselves as an "autistic person," like Temple Grandin, quoted at the beginning of this paper, considering autism as a core part of their identity and not something separate. Others, including some parents, advocacy groups and health care professionals, prefer to use "person with autism" as a wish to highlight the person first.

Furthermore, there is no consensus on whether to call autism "disorders," "disabilities," or simply "differences." Some people feel that medical terms are too negative, while others worry that using softer language ignores the real struggles. At its core, this debate is about who gets to decide how neurodivergence is described: those who live it, those who support them, or the medical system. As our perspectives and understanding broaden, the language continues to change, and not everyone agrees on which words best reflect people's experiences.

In that sense, the concept of neurodiversity is also sometimes perceived as challenging certain foundational assumptions or established views within mainstream psychiatry and psychology, particularly the "traditional" tendency to pathologise conditions such as autism, ADHD, and learning differences. Rather than viewing these solely as disorders, the neurodiversity perspective emphasises them as natural variations in human cognition and behaviour, promoting acceptance, inclusion, and respect for all ways of thinking and learning. Just as Biodiversity was coined for a political purpose, to advocate for the conservation of the environment, Judy Singer intended the term Neurodiversity specifically for an advocacy purpose.

When discussing neurodiversity, the image of a classroom "annual" photo offers a concrete example of diversity. In such pictures, we easily see a wide range of heights, body shapes, and facial features,

and we accept that as normal human variations. We don't expect every child to be the same height or to look the same. Neurodiversity invites us to think of brains in the same way: different ways of thinking, processing, learning, and interacting are part of natural human variation. Just as physical diversity is visible in a photo, neurodiversity may not be as visible, but it's just as real and just as valuable.

Ultimately, Neurodiversity should be understood as a subset of Biodiversity.

NEURODIVERSITY AS A GENUINE CORPORATE OPPORTUNITY

Neurodiversity isn't only about difference; it's also about potential.

Temple Grandin framed it elegantly: *"At autism meetings, grandfathers who were either NASA engineers or computer scientists have told me that they discovered they were autistic when a grandchild was diagnosed. Mathematical thinkers and visual thinkers have skills that complement each other. A common denominator for both kinds of diverse minds is that they are highly specialized: they are good at one skill and poor at another. People who are extremely good at either mathematics or visual thinking are often socially awkward."*

Temple Grandin, Ph.D. (Foreword of "Neurodiversity, From Phenomenology to Neurobiology and Enhancing Technologies", edited by Lawrence K. Fung, American Psychiatric Association Publishing, 2021, www.appi.org)

Years ago, a friend shared how his ADHD colleague was alternating his ADHD medication use: pausing it to be creative, then resuming it to focus on developing and structuring his ideas.

In this respect, while ADHD is still often framed as a deficit-based disorder, focusing more on the deficit, i.e. what people can't achieve, a growing body of research explores its potential links to enhanced creative performance, divergent thinking, and unconventional problem-solving. Few studies have investigated the link between ADHD and creativity; however, initial findings suggest that individuals with ADHD may exhibit enhanced originality and divergent thinking. Psychostimulant medications can improve focus but may reduce creative spontaneity, as reported by my friend's colleague.

An article published in 2020, "Characteristics of ADHD Related to Executive Function: Differential Predictions for Creativity-Related Traits" by C. Taylor et al. (<https://doi.org/10.1002/jobc.370>) brings an interesting angle, supporting that diversity is indeed diversity, and that ADHD is indeed diverse! This study investigates the relationship between self-reported ADHD symptom dimensions, particularly inattention and hyperactivity/impulsivity and various dimensions of creativity. The authors adopt a nuanced approach by focusing on executive function to gain a deeper understanding of how ADHD traits impact creative thinking. They find that higher levels of inattention are associated with increased originality, suggesting that reduced cognitive control may promote more novel thinking. In contrast, hyperactivity/impulsivity does not consistently relate to creativity.

Obviously, research on Neurodiversity is still in its infancy.

The autistic physicians are also increasingly contributing to the discourse on neurodiversity, challenging traditional deficit-based views of autism and other neurodivergent conditions. Their writings

often advocate for a neurodiversity-affirmative approach, calling for structural reform in medical education, practice, and policy, and report their struggle to reconcile their internal experience with the external expectations of the medical profession.

Dr. Mary Doherty, an autistic physician and founder of Autistic Doctors International in 2019 (ADI - <https://autisticdoctorsinternational.com>), repeatedly states: “We live between two worlds, the world of medicine and the world of autism, and we often belong fully to neither” (<https://www.autistica.org.uk/get-involved/my-autism-story/dr-mary-doherty>).

In her thesis, she critiques the standard assessments in medicine and psychiatry, which are predominantly oriented toward identifying deficits, such as impaired communication or executive dysfunction, while neglecting the cognitive and perceptual differences that may also reflect areas of strength, such as focused interests, pattern recognition, or alternative information processing styles:

“Historically, research on autism has focused on deficits and difficulties. In recent years, there has been increasing acceptance of the neurodiversity paradigm, which challenges this pathologizing approach with a recognition that autism is not an inherent flaw or disordered way of being. Instead, aligned with the social model of disability, this paradigm scrutinises social, cultural, political, and environmental factors as causes of contextual disability that traditionally fuelled sentiments of disorder. Thus, autism may be thought of as a common set of differences. The benefits of the neurodiversity paradigm are significant, enabling us to have a conversation that does not focus on deficits, emphasizes the importance of diverse and neurodiverse communities, and takes a wider perspective, thinking about how external factors impact the capabilities and success of each individual.”

As many autistic advocates have emphasised, in different words but with a constant and shared conviction — “Autistic people aren’t failed neurotypicals; they are a different neurotype with their own strengths.” This reframing lies at the heart of the neurodiversity movement, challenging deficit-based narratives and asserting the legitimacy of Neurodiversity.

CONCLUSION: STRENGTH IN DIFFERENCE

In the revised 2020 edition of Temple Grandin’s *Different... Not Less*, Dr. Wenn Lawson, an autistic psychologist and researcher, contributes a profoundly personal and professional reflection: “Inspiring Stories of Achievement and Successful Employment from Adults with Autism, Asperger’s, and ADHD”. He describes not only the external barriers faced by neurodivergent individuals but also the internal validation that emerges when one’s neurodivergence is finally recognised as meaningful and valuable.

Some companies have grasped the opportunity, not as a simple inclusivity exercise but as strategic thinking and performance-driven transformations, like

• EY (Ernst & Young): Neurodiversity-Powered Transformation

“Engaging professionals who can accelerate emerging technologies and solve complex problems is a business imperative. Yet, one talent segment capable of delivering exponential value has largely gone untapped. Utilizing the talents of neurodivergent people can help companies unlock their full potential.

Our Neurodiversity-Powered Transformation solution...”

(https://www.ey.com/en_us/services/innovation/neurodiversity-powered-transformation)

• Microsoft: Neurodiversity Hiring Program

In April 2015, Microsoft introduced a pilot program to hire people with autism and open doors for long-term career opportunities. That pilot evolved into the Microsoft Neurodiversity Hiring Program. (<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/diversity/inside-microsoft/cross-disability/neurodiversityhiring>)

• JPMorgan Chase: Proven Value, Autism at Work

“It can be a learning curve, but the value proposition for both the individual and the team is very sound.”

(<https://www.jpmorganchase.com/newsroom/stories/autism-at-work>)

The future of work may well belong to organisations that move beyond symbolic inclusion, designing systems, cultures, and leadership frameworks that recognise neurodiversity not as an exception to accommodate, but as a dimension of human potential to embrace.



WOMEN IN TECH® INDIA

Strengthening The India Story

By Radhika Yuvraj Iyengar 



Women In Tech® India, an arm of Women in Tech, a Global non-profit organization is a thriving community that advocates and champions the participation of women and girls in STEM in India—especially in leadership, entrepreneurship, and emerging technologies like AI addressing core areas of Ethics, Safety and Transparency. It is committed to bridging the gaps that exist in realizing the full potential of women in tech in India by strategically connecting stakeholders—Government, Corporates, VCs, and NGOs—with women-led startups, technology professionals, women self-help groups, and young girls in STEM. **Radhika Yuvraj Iyengar**, The Country Director of Women In Tech@India talks about how such communities can open doors for women to participate with renewed strength in global trade missions.

STRATEGIC ROLE OF 'WOMEN IN TECH®INDIA' IN INDIA'S GLOBAL POSITIONING

Women in tech India is an active community that has shown an immense strategic potential to elevate India's position in the global supply chain, particularly in high-impact sectors like MedTech, Digital health, and Advanced manufacturing. Driving skill building, thought leadership and innovation, through advocating, facilitating and nurturing participation of women in technology in India. In the areas of inclusive and scalable solutions, especially in healthcare and wellness—women technologists in India are creating globally relevant products that address both local and international needs. Their growing presence in export-ready startups, OEM partnerships, and digital platforms strengthen India's credibility as a reliable supplier to regions like MENA and Europe. Moreover, with increasing presence in leadership, in talent development, ethical tech governance, and international collaborations they are enhancing the country's image as a progressive, inclusive, and future-ready economy. Through active participation in global forums, trade missions, and standards bodies, Women in Tech in India are not only driving economic value but also shaping the narrative of an India that is equitable, innovative, and globally competitive.

INDIA AS A KEY PARTNER FOR MENA & EUROPE

- **UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt:** Are key partners in the MENA region, particularly in the fields of diagnostics, wellness, and hospital infrastructure development.
- **Germany, France, UK:** Collaborations in research and development, AI in healthcare, and regulatory harmonization are paving the way for enhanced cooperation.
- **CE-marked Indian products:** An increasing number of Indian medical devices are gaining access to the EU market, reflecting the growing trust in Indian manufacturing capabilities.

India has significantly upgraded its MedTech ecosystem through a series of reforms aimed at aligning with global regulatory and quality standards. The implementation of the Medical Device Rules (MDR) and the National Medical Device Policy has streamlined compliance, while the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme incentivizes domestic manufacturing of advanced medical devices. Additionally, the establishment of **Medical Device Parks** provides critical infrastructure such as testing labs and R&D centres. Initiatives like **MedTech Mitra** and the **PRIP** Scheme further support innovation by promoting research, clinical validation, and commercialization of indigenous technologies.

IMEEC: BRIDGING NEWER REGIONS & GAPS, BUILDING INCLUSIVE FUTURES

The India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) ecosystem can benefit from opening opportunities for inclusivity and for women to become key players in digital infrastructure and trade facilitation.

Such ecosystems can unlock cross-border opportunities and prepare women for global tech leadership. For example, the corridor is expected to foster joint research and innovation centers. therefore, Women researchers and technologists can co-lead biotech, AI, and health-tech collaborations with institutions in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Europe. Women-led startups in MedTech, digital health, AI, and wellness can tap into new markets across the Middle East and Europe. Some thriving areas could be Ayurveda-based nutraceuticals: which are becoming increasingly popular in the MENA region and parts of Europe, reflecting a growing interest in natural health solutions and Yoga-tech platforms: Innovations that integrate wearables with traditional wellness practices are emerging, appealing to health-conscious consumers.

Women-led platforms in telemedicine, edtech, fintech, and wellness can scale across IMEEC-linked countries, leveraging shared digital infrastructure and diaspora networks, can bring in unique value propositions.

THE UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION

“The distinctiveness of Women In Tech® India lies in our integrative approach”, says Radhika Yuvraj Iyengar, The Country Director of Women In Tech India. “Instead of merely offering fragmented support, we focus on synchronizing efforts across sectors to create a cohesive pipeline that nurtures women from education to employment and entrepreneurship and global players. Our strategy focuses on unifying various providers—government-backed initiatives, funding bodies, tech giants, knowledge partners & standards organizations, and community-driven NGOs—with women in tech thought leaders and aspirants in the country. Our mission is to create an integrated ecosystem where these forces work together seamlessly, to create impact. In the Women In Tech®India community, we position women as co-creators of change rather than passive recipients of support. By ensuring their active participation in global projects, designing programs, driving innovation, and leading the mentorship network, we cultivate a self-sustaining ecosystem that continuously evolves and drives innovation and disruption at scale.

“

Women In Tech® India operates on a powerful, integrative model that bridges systemic gaps by uniting government initiatives, venture capital, fintech, tech corporations, startups, and grassroots NGOs in India. This intersectional approach ensures that women—across urban, semi-urban, and rural India—gain equitable access to mentorship, resources, and opportunities. Backed by a thriving community of nearly 2,000 members, including 31% women leaders and founders and 68% focused on AI-driven solutions, we are not just building inclusion—we are shaping India’s future in technology and as a Global Economic Stakeholder through collective strength, innovation, and purpose.



WEBINAR

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

JULY 18th

SPEAKERS ATTENDING OUR WEBINAR:

- **Alessandro Panaro** – Head of Transport & Logistics, SRM, Italy
- **Jai Karan Maggu** – Technical Project Manager, Total Énergies, member of the Indian Business Club
- **Amal Louis** – Director of Business Development & Intermodal Solutions, Port de Marseille Fos

1. CONTEXT AND LAUNCH OF THE PROJECT

IMEC is presented as a strategic initiative launched in 2023 during the G20 Summit in New Delhi.

The so-called corridor aims to facilitate the movement of goods and services between India, the Middle East, and Europe. The objective being an alternative to the traditional maritime route of the Suez Canal (commercial and geopolitical competitiveness). In the current security context of the region, this alternative route is once again being put forward.

2. STRUCTURE OF THE CORRIDOR

The Eastern corridor connects India to the Arabian Gulf via maritime routes, passing through Jebel Ali Port. The Northern corridor combines a rail link from Jebel Ali to Haifa with a maritime link from Haifa to key European ports, including Piraeus, Trieste, Genoa, and Marseille.

3. OPPORTUNITIES AND BENEFITS

IMEC according to experts could reach 9 to 12% of global maritime trade. It would help reduce transit times and provide a strategic alternative to the Suez Canal route. The project would also promote the development of multimodal infrastructure such as ports, railways, pipelines, and undersea cables. For Italy, IMEC would strengthen the role of Trieste and Genoa as major gateways to Europe.

4. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

All speakers highlighted several challenges. The required railway infrastructure investments are extremely expensive, and maintenance represents a heavy burden. Intermodal management—combining maritime and rail transport—is complex and does not always guarantee efficiency. Certain types of cargo, such as hydrocarbons and liquid bulk, cannot be transported by rail. In addition, customs and trade barriers may hinder the smooth flow of goods.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, despite these challenges, the webinar participants emphasized that IMEC represents a major geo-economic opportunity. It brings India and Southeast Asia closer to Europe and enhances ports of Trieste in Italy and port of Marseille for France as strategic positions in the Mediterranean sea.

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 represents a global ambition, where sport becomes a driver of economic and social transformation.

The panel assembled by The Global Diwan with the support of Franklin Law Firm believes that sport can be a real lever for attractiveness, a tool of soft power in the traditional sense of the term, but with very different realities: events, training, infrastructure, mobility, inclusion, innovation—an entire ecosystem that goes far beyond performance or practice. A strategic tool for 21st-century cities that our dear partners have helped to understand.

Paris Ile de France Capitale Économique (PCE)

EGIS Group

GL events



THE GLOBAL DIWAN
CONNECTING EAST, WEST AND SOUTH LEADERS

FRANKLIN

Paris, le 30 Juin 2025

The Global Diwan, en partenariat avec Franklin Avocats, a le plaisir de vous inviter à une conférence-débat en présence et avec le soutien de Son Excellence Fahad AL RUWAILY, Ambassadeur du Royaume d'Arabie Saoudite à Paris.

**Vision 2030 du Royaume d'Arabie saoudite
Vers les infrastructures et la pratique sportive des Saoudiens**

Avec la participation de
M.DIOGO TADDEI
DIRECTOR, HEAD OF SPORTS AND EVENTS GROUPE EGIS
MME CHLOÉ VOISIN-BORMUTH
DIRECTRICE GÉNÉRALE PARIS ILE DE FRANCE CAPITALE ÉCONOMIQUE
M.OLIVIER FERRATON
DIRECTEUR GÉNÉRAL DÉLÉGUÉ GROUPE GL EVENTS

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