

## Think Research and Advisory partners with MEI to launch a flagship event to be held annually on the sidelines of the UNGA exploring the MENA region's critical role in shaping key global issues

- ❖ MENA Forum 2022 takes place on the sidelines of the 77<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly in New York City
- ❖ The distinguished panellists and moderators include Ministers of Foreign Affairs from Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Bahrain, as well as Egypt's Minister for International Cooperation
- ❖ To dovetail with the Forum's discussion of topical global issues, one of the panels will examine the findings of a Think research report published today titled *Waterway to the Future: Unleashing the Red Sea Arena's Potential*, which explores present and future challenges for the waterway exacerbated by the Russian-Ukrainian conflict

**New York, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022** – Think Research and Advisory, a newly launched global research and advisory firm providing independent strategic advisory on the MENA region, is pleased to announce that it will host an exclusive policy forum on the sidelines of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, in partnership with the non-partisan think tank, the Middle East Institute (MEI).

The theme for the inaugural MENA Forum, which will be held on an annual basis, is “*Unlocking the Region's Potential for Prosperity, Security and a Sustainable Global Future*” and will explore the region's critical role in contributing to the global agenda.

The event aims to explore topics at the heart of the global conversation as world leaders and policymakers gather in New York City to discuss global priorities during UNGA's high-level week. MENA Forum 2022 will explore and highlight how the MENA region can address this global agenda with a focus on international cooperation, food, and sustainability. The Forum will also explore how key regional players are navigating the international arena to ensure a better global future built on sustainable growth.

The Forum will convene a diverse group of senior regional and global decision-makers from government, international organisations, and the private sector including, His Highness Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Her Excellency Ms. Rania Mashat, Egypt's Minister of International Cooperation; His Excellency Mr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Bahrain's Minister of Foreign Affairs; and His Excellency Mr. Ayman Al Safadi, Jordan's Minister of Foreign Affairs, amongst others.

The five sessions for MENA Forum 2022 are as follows:

- **A Discussion with H.H. Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia:** In a rare intimate discussion, His Highness Prince Faisal bin Farhan, Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, will be joined by Mr. Paul Salem, President of MEI, for a one-on-one conversation offering an incisive exploration of Saudi Arabia's role in global cooperation.
- **Ensuring Food Security at a Time of Global Instability:** In a panel moderated by Ms. Elise Lobbott, Politico's Contributing Editor and former CNN Global Affairs Correspondent, His Excellency Mr. Ayman Al Safadi, Jordan's Minister of Foreign Affairs; Her Excellency Ms. Rania Mashat, Egypt's Minister of International Cooperation; Mr. Ferid Belhaj, World Bank Vice President for Middle East and North Africa; and Ms. Sara Menker, CEO of Gro Intelligence, will discuss the rise in global food

insecurity exacerbated by the war in Ukraine. In light of these pressures and its dependence on grain and other food imports, the MENA region finds itself especially vulnerable. The expert panel assembled will examine what steps regional governments and the international community can take to mitigate food shortages, inflation, and associated disruptions for the region and beyond.

- **Lunch and A Discussion with H.E. Mr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bahrain:** In an intimate, one-to-one conversation, His Excellency Mr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Bahrain's Minister of Foreign Affairs, will share unique insights with Mr. Brian Katulis, Vice President of Policy at MEI, about how the changing regional and international landscape is shaping Bahrain's role in the international arena, as well as its relationship with other regional powers.
- **Supporting a More Stable Global Energy Transition Prioritising Climate Action:** In a panel moderated by Dr. Karen Young, political economist focusing on the Gulf and broader MENA region at MEI, Ms. Jessica Obeid, Think's Head of Renewable Energy; Mr. Ben Cahill, Senior Fellow at the Energy Security and Climate Change Programme at the Center for Strategic International Studies (CSIS); and Dr. Kaushik Deb, Senior Research Scholar at the Center on Global Energy Policy of Columbia University, will discuss how the international community can build a global policy framework that meets today's pressing energy needs while remaining committed to the transition to clean and sustainable energy. In this context, the panel will examine how leading oil producers can cooperate with the international community to balance energy transition with meeting increasing energy needs.
- **Unlocking the Potential of the Red Sea – A Key Global Crossroad:** In a panel moderated by Dr. Neil Quilliam, Think's Director of Energy Research, Ambassador Jeffrey Feltman, former US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa and former Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs at the United Nations; Ms. Inger La Cour-Andersen, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); Dr. Ibrahim Almojel, CEO of the Saudi Industrial Development Fund; and Dr. Manar AlMoneef, Chief Investment Officer of NEOM, will discuss the Red Sea corridor at a time when it is increasingly important to global shipping and commerce particularly amid supply chain disruptions and security threats. Supported by today's publication of a Think research report titled *Waterway to the Future: Unleashing the Red Sea Arena's Potential*, the panel will address how regional and international partners can enhance stability and the future of sustainable development.

#### **Think Research Report - 'Waterway to the Future: Unleashing the Red Sea Arena's Potential'**

- Think Research and Advisory's timely research report on the Red Sea reflects the sub-region's importance as a vital global trade route, the significance of which has grown considerably as the Russia-Ukraine conflict has threatened the world's energy, food and trade security which has resulted in securing international trade routes more important than ever to the global order.
- Through this insightful research Think aims to raise awareness of the key risks and opportunities in this key waterway and its implications for global and regional powers. Think also seeks to inform key decision makers and global leaders on the immense opportunities available to ensure the Red Sea waterway remains both safe and relevant through smart investments and by furthering regional cooperation initiatives.
- The long-term primacy of the Red Sea waterway will be re-configured as global warming opens up Arctic Sea passages for shorter trade routes between Asia and Europe and, moreover, as the transit of crude oil and LNG (liquid natural gas) through the Red Sea corridor becomes less important as demand for hydrocarbons falls commensurately with increased global renewable energy use. The report highlights the opportunities for regional stakeholders to tackle the upcoming challenges

that will define the Red Sea's future for generations and therefore impact the wider geopolitical, macroeconomic and environmental outcomes of a globally significant trade hub at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa. By working through platforms to deliver green investments that strengthen renewable energy capabilities, Red Sea states can protect the ecologically diverse and economically important arena for the benefit of its people, and the world.

The MENA Forum coincides with a period of significant change in the MENA region and a rise in the need for international cooperation including amongst the wider global community and regional stakeholders to tackle unprecedented challenges.

Think was created to provide world-class independent research and advisory on the MENA region to support international and regional decision makers and entities in navigating this increasingly complex global landscape. The firm's leading advisory industry talent comprising experts and analysts from top institutions, such as the United Nations, the World Bank and Chatham House, have a deep understanding of the region, which Think leverages for its strong suite of services providing unique insights, analysis, and evidence-based views in the areas of energy, geopolitics, macroeconomics, and media. The Think team is well versed in these thematic areas of focus enabling them to deliver distinctive perspectives and actionable data on key MENA markets and audiences to help businesses and decision makers understand policy, public sentiment, and behaviour.

Think's deep regional knowledge is further bolstered by being a firm born out of the Saudi Research and Media Group (SRMG), a leading independent global media group headquartered in the Middle East, with a 50-year legacy of independent coverage on the MENA region.

Think is led by Haifa Al-Jedea, an international relations expert in strategic advisory whose work has revolved around creating effective international cooperation. She has also served as a thought leader in relation to women's empowerment.

**Haifa Al-Jedea, Managing Director, Think Research and Advisory, said:** "MENA Forum 2022 was created to highlight the productive role the MENA region can play in addressing issues most pertinent to the global agenda and to reach a sustainable future. It also explores challenges and risks from the perspectives of key players in the region as the global community is experiencing unprecedented times. Think welcomes leaders from the region to take part in insightful discussions across five high-level panels on consequential topics from international cooperation to food and energy security.

"Think is proud to launch its global research and advisory practice with this landmark event and we are pleased to have found event partners in MEI who share our vision for a leading MENA-focused UNGA side event. Think is committed to providing independent research and advisory and this event is a showcase of our deep regional and global network and the expert advisors that comprise our team which Think leverages to provide unparalleled strategic advisory capabilities."

**Paul Salem, President and CEO, Middle East Institute, said:** "MEI is pleased to participate in 'MENA Forum 2022' as it convenes prominent leaders and policy practitioners to produce informed and practical recommendations to pursue the goals of a more sustainable, just, and prosperous world. We welcome the work that Think Research and Advisory seeks to tackle as it launches its activities, including globally-oriented research and analysis on some of the most demanding issues facing the Middle East today."

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**About Think Research and Advisory:**

Think Research and Advisory is a globally-oriented MENA-based research company, providing research and advisory on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to help entities navigate a complex global landscape and support decision makers with unique insights and data. Think's experienced team of researchers and advisors are focused on providing insights, perspectives, and nuanced information on the most pressing challenges in macroeconomics, geopolitics, energy and media policy affecting the MENA region. Think prides itself on delivering its world-class independent research and strategic advisory services. Think Research and Advisory is born out of the Saudi Research and Media Group, a leading global media group from the Middle East. [www.thinkresearchandadvisory.com](http://www.thinkresearchandadvisory.com)

**About the Middle East Institute:**

Founded in 1946, the Middle East Institute is the oldest Washington-based institution dedicated solely to the study of the Middle East. MEI has earned a reputation as an unbiased source of information and analysis on this critical region of the world, a reputation it has meticulously safeguarded since its creation. Today, MEI remains a respected, non-partisan voice in the field of Middle East studies. [www.mei.edu](http://www.mei.edu)