

**A Privileged History Working with H.E. Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh
Chairman, TAG Global**

Elissar Sarrouh

CEO, Expert Consulting on Governance

I first met H.E. Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Chairman, TAG Organization in March 2006, during my tenure as UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Egypt. A high level Arab regional meeting was organized by the Global Evian Group - a coalition of corporate, government and opinion leaders committed to inclusive, equitable and sustainable global market economy- in collaboration with TAG Organization. Chairman and CEO of TAGorg and Chair of the Evian Group Arab Region, Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, chaired the opening panel to which I was invited to speak and share UNDP contributions in support of Egypt's economic reforms and trade liberalization policies.

The opening panel included powerful and visionary remarks from H.E. Abu-Ghazaleh on challenges facing the Arab region as a result of fast paced globalization and liberalization reforms. In his remarks,

H.E. Amr Mousa, Secretary General of the League of Arab States, at the time, reiterated Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh's insights and acknowledged the many challenges facing the region. He welcomed the pioneering initiative put in place by Chairman Abu-Ghazaleh, to foster an environment for dialogue and confidence building to boost economic growth. An acknowledgement of the importance of this initiative, is H.E. Mousa accepting Dr. Abu-Ghazaleh's nomination to become the Honorary Chairman of the Evian Group Arab Region.

In her opening remarks, the Egyptian Minister for International Cooperation, H.E. Dr. Fayza Aboulnaga reiterated that achieving a balance during the globalisation process is vital to successful transition, and such events and dialogue is important to harness local support while transitioning to liberalization policies. She commended Chairman Abu-Ghazaleh for organizing this event and for launching the Global Youth Forum, in particular, the focus on creating opportunities for the youth in these uncertain times.

In turn, I shared UNDP strategy to support Egypt economic reforms and liberalization efforts. This high level event ushered in a series of collaborative efforts and programs between TAG Organization and UNDP, and gave me the opportunity to work closely with H.E. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh on a number of programs and initiatives in Egypt and elsewhere.

An important project I worked closely with TAG Org Chairman and his team, prior to my departure from Egypt in 2006, is a partnership between UNDP and the Ministry of Investment to publish the first Report on “Business Solutions for Human Development”. The Report revealed important findings and knowledge on how business can support the MDGs. It revealed a synergy between government efforts and the contribution of the business community in Egypt to meet the MDGs. Egypt at the time, was witnessing an increasingly strong sense of ownership by the business community of the human development goals, and a culture of corporate social responsibility was rising with business corporations increasingly realizing the importance of investment in poor communities.

TAG Organization was a prominent partner in this project. TAGO Chairman was a leader of corporate social responsibility in Egypt and other Arab countries, and was a major contributor to the Report providing exemplary best practices on business support to human development and promoting Global Compact principles. He was a huge advocate of UNDP efforts to complete this project.

In 2006, H.E. TAGO Chairman and Chairman of The Evian Group Arab Region (EGAR), invited me to join EGAR Board of Trustees. I accepted this honour and served two terms as Secretary of the Board and Honorary Member of EGAR Board of Trustees. EGAR was a vision of Chairman Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, to create a powerful coalition of prominent business, government and opinion leaders in the Arab region to ensure greater competitiveness of the Arab region and facilitate its integration into the global economy. A series of programs, projects, conferences and publications were developed and put

in place ranging from social, economic and educational initiatives, to focusing on women entrepreneurs, creating a Youth chapter to empower Arab Youth in a competitive market, and building bridges with the global economy.

My next UNDP postings took me to New York/USA followed by a posting to represent UNIFEM (UN Women today) at the EU in Brussels. TAGO partnerships continued to grow stronger with the UN and UNDP at regional and global levels. TAGO launched a joint “UNDP/Private Sector Partnership Forum” during a special meeting held at Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Knowledge Forum in Amman, Jordan. TAG Global Chairman, assumed several senior leadership positions and nominations to lead UN High Level Forums and Meetings. He was frequently nominated and approached to lead key partnerships with the UN, businesses and governments. The Chairmanship positions held by Mr. Chairman of TAG Global over the years, provided a highly distinguished view, from the Arab Region, on various global challenges and insights into rule-based multilateral system, UN ICT Forum, UN Global Compact, regional integration into the global economy, and visionary recommendations for WTO and private sector engagement, as well as various UN Global Forums.

In 2010, I was appointed United Nations Resident Coordinator, and UNDP Resident Representative in the United Arab Emirates. I had the privilege to represent the UN/UNDP at the 5th Annual Forum of the UN Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies and Development (GAID) and hear again first hand, H.E. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Chairman of GAID at the time, deliver a keynote address and announce the launch of the MDG eNABLER, a virtual engine to help developing countries to advance the MDGs achievements. A primary task that I had, as UN/UNDP Representative, was to work with donors and partners to support the UNSG MDG 5 years Acceleration plan, and that innovative tool developed by TAG Global, was very much welcomed by UN organizations, international donors and governments in support of developing countries.

Upon my departure from the United Nations in 2015, I accepted a professorship position at McGill University and founded Expert Consulting on Governance Firm, providing professional services and expertise in Governance, Agenda 2030 and women economic empowerment. I was honoured to be entrusted by H.E. Dr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, TAGO Chairman, to support his vision in creating TAG GOVERNANCE Institute and develop the first phase of this project. The work started on this phase in April 2021 and was completed in August 2021.

Under TAGO Chairman leadership and guidance, the TAG Governance Institute vision, mission, principles, model and practice areas were developed. TAG Governance is envisaged to act as a convening power and catalyst supporting good governance for thriving, resilient and inclusive economies in the Arab region. It embraces Integrity and Equity as key pillars of good governance.

TAG Governance is an independent, not-for-profit professional organization and think tank headquartered in Amman, Jordan. It is a regional institute with a global vision and outreach. It will act as hub for professional governance expertise; a forum for dialogue; and a catalyst for change. TAG Governance will draw on the finest minds in the region and all over the world, to tackle pressing governance challenges that face governments and businesses today.

Building on a distinguished global and regional stature of TAG Global and distinguished leadership of its Chairman at global and regional levels, TAG Governance is in a unique position, to play a central role of convening global, regional and national stakeholders, business leaders, and development actors together with governments in the Arab region, to deliberate and tackle global challenges and articulate regional and national policy options and solutions.

I am honoured and privileged to have been entrusted with developing this important project capturing the vision of a visionary and pioneer in corporate governance, international development, Internet governance and Corporate Social Responsibility and many more, H.E. Dr. Talal Abu- Ghazaleh, Chairman of TAG Global.