

Global Ministerial Roundtable Program – Concept Note
Theme: “Industrial Development Strategies and New Generation of Free Zones”

Introduction

The Global Ministerial Roundtable will convene Ministers and other high-level global stakeholders to address key and emerging challenges and opportunities for free zones. It will examine the evolving role of industrial development strategies and the emergence of a new generation of Free Zones and Special Economic Zones (SEZs). The Roundtable is expected to provide a strategic platform for Ministers to exchange perspectives on how industrial policy and zone-based development can respond to a rapidly transforming global economy and new investment-development paradigm.

Global production systems are undergoing profound reconfiguration. Geopolitical uncertainty, supply chain realignments, regulatory fragmentation, and uneven logistics readiness are reshaping investment decisions and industrial competitiveness. At the same time, digital transformation, sustainability imperatives, and new models of public-private collaboration are creating fresh opportunities for industrial upgrading and value creation.

In this context, Free Zones and SEZs are no longer defined solely by fiscal incentives or export orientation. They are increasingly expected to function as integrated industrial ecosystems—supporting innovation, enabling greener production, strengthening resilience, and anchoring countries more effectively within global and regional value chains.

The Global Ministerial Roundtable will explore how modern industrial strategies and next-generation Free Zones can jointly address these challenges while unlocking new sources of growth. It will emphasize practical policy responses, governance innovations, and investment models that balance competitiveness with resilience and sustainability.

Key Issues for Ministerial Discussion

1. Strategic Role of Free Zones in National Industrial Policy

How can Free Zones and Special Economic Zones be more effectively aligned with national and regional industrial development strategies? Ministers will consider how zones can support priority sectors, strengthen economic resilience, and respond to the reconfiguration of global and regional value chains amid rising uncertainty.

2. Structural Design of the New Generation of Free Zones

What structural features define the new generation of Free Zones? This discussion will focus on zone typologies, sectoral clustering, integrated service models, and the shift toward outcomes-oriented zone frameworks that go beyond traditional incentive-driven approaches.

3. Digital Operations and Smart Zone Management

How can digital technologies enhance the operational efficiency and transparency of Free Zones? Ministers will exchange views on digital single windows, automated processes, smart logistics systems, and data-driven zone management that improve investor services.

4. Sustainability and Green Industrial Models

How can Free Zones support environmentally sustainable industrial development? The session will explore low-carbon infrastructure, renewable energy integration, circular economy practices, and environmental

The session will conclude with a **Ministerial Communiqué or Call to Action**, capturing key takeaway messages and encouraging Ministers, Free Zone authorities, international organizations, and the investment community to pursue coherent and coordinated efforts. The objective is to create synergies that enable the new generation of Free Zones to contribute to sustainable development, and prosperity for all.

Participants

- Ministers responsible for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones
- Special invitees, including Heads of International Organizations and Development Banks
- Selected Executive representatives of Free Zones and SEZ authorities
- Private-sector leaders and investment stakeholders