

# MEADFA launches Advocacy Working Group to protect duty free industry

MEADFA, the Middle East and Africa Duty Free Association, has ramped up its advocacy and engagement capabilities with the creation of an Advocacy Working Group (AWG).

The AWG's strategy seeks to reinforce MEADFA's position as the leading voice of travel retail in Africa and the Middle East. As a first step, the AWG launched a workshop on November 25, during MEADFA's annual conference in Oman, calling for a cross-category representation to make MEADFA a more powerful voice and to support the protection of the duty free industry.

The AWG is developing a cross-category advocacy approach, representing the entire duty free and travel retail industry, delivering a combined voice. The AWG aims to promote awareness of the industry with key regulators and policy makers to ensure the future of the industry.

In both Africa and the Middle East, MEADFA expects the duty free industry will face greater regulatory challenges across a broad range of categories in 2020. These challenges are driven in some cases by coordinated global policies, and in others by the emergence of new trends in the regulation for specific products.

"MEADFA has a role to play in engaging with industry and policy makers in the Middle East and African region to represent the duty free industry concerns as part of wider global campaigns," the association said. "MEADFA is therefore aiming to develop a proactive approach to advocacy with its integrated Advocacy Working Group of cross-category industry representatives, to guide the association's strategy."

In addition, MEADFA recently appointed Rita Chidiac as General Secretary to drive the Advocacy Working Group agenda, operationally and strategically.

Chidiac joined Japan Tobacco International (JTI) in Lebanon in 2011, responsible for its corporate affairs and communications activities in the Middle East and Levant region. In 2016, she became an integral part of JTI's Worldwide Duty Free team based in Geneva. In 2017, she relocated to Dubai where she manages JTI's corporate affairs and communications activities for duty free covering Africa, East Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East region. In April 2019, Chidiac was elected to the Board of the Middle East and Africa Duty Free Association (MEADFA).