



Dr. Shafik Ashkar
AFA Secretary General

Filled with happiness, I stand before you in the opening ceremony of the 24th AFA International Technical Conference, held in the dear land of Amman; the land of intimacy, Arab gathering and faithfulness.

So, I start by welcoming you all.

Arab fertilizer industry represents a major hub for world market fertilizer provision and that in the shed of the growing demand on different kinds of food and bio-fuel industry, which also became part and parcel of many countries official policies, at the top of which Brazil, USA and European Common Market. Therefore, the aforementioned leads to an increasing demand on fertilizers, highly contributing in agricultural productivity quantity and quality increase in addition to improving agricultural product amount to range between 30% and 85%, especially in the light of the decrease in rainfall percentage, the limited arable lands, the rise of desertification, disputes and wars.

Consequently, without fertilizer usage many countries will lose its relative advantage in achieving self-sufficiency in line with the 80 million people increase witnessed annually by the world population, reaching about 7 billion people by the end of 2011. Such a figure is expected to reach 8 billion by 2030 and 9 billion by 2050.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

When talking about Arab fertilizer industry, we emphasize that it represents the backbone of compound fertilizer industry, as our Arab world is abundant with major resources, namely:

- 70% of phosphate rock international stock
- 30% of natural gas international stock
- 6% of potash salts international stock

Moreover, Arab fertilizer industries occupies major shares in international production and exports in a way maximizing annually as shown generally in the table presenting the different products.

Hence, Arab fertilizer industry has recorded, during its more than 100 years march, a huge and tangible development and an increasing share of world production and international exports. Such took place as a result of the region oil and natural gas sector development together with the boom witnessed by the Arab Gulf countries in producing nitrogenous fertilizers parallel to the continuous rise in phosphate rocks and fertilizers productivity, during the last three decades. Therefore, the Arab region, extending east and west Suez Canal, was effectively positioned on the map of fertilizer production and exporting to international markets. It is also worth mentioning that this rate of production and exporting will heighten greatly by 2016 after the completion of the future projects of ammonia, nitrogenous, phosphate rocks, potash and phosphate fertilizers production.

When talking about Arab fertilizer industry, by any means, we cannot ignore highlighting the water issue, on which fertilizer industry is based. Also, in the light of all related indicators, they prove that the region will face a serious crisis as a result of the continuous decrease in the amount of the region rivers water, the drop in water reservoir and water over-consumption in some Arab countries. Bearing in mind the fact that the Arab region population will reach 600 million people during the coming 40 years, a serious competition emerges between the different needs for water usage; drinking, agriculture and industry. A bell rings, here, reminding us of the 83 million people in the Arab region suffering from a shortage in pure potable water.

So, from this podium, I call upon you all to achieve more integration and coordination through:

- 1) Enhancing Arab fertilizer industry sector, providing required raw materials with acceptable prices and conditions, setting legislations supporting the establishment of such industry and taking in consideration the close and direct relationship between fertilizer industry and agricultural system and producing strategic food crops via including:

- The untapped agricultural resources (lands – water) in Sudan, Egypt, Syria and Morocco aiming at bridging the food gap and supporting food security, as Arab food import volume amount to more than USD 40 billion annually.
- 2) Investing in required infrastructure to develop the inter-Arab countries exchange, where fertilizer industry raw materials are provided and where huge agricultural projects establishment are planned. In other words, there is an opportunity to invest in the logistics system, marine lines and different transportation means in order to increase inter-Arab integration opportunities.
- 3) Intensifying processes of searching and excavating for raw materials in the Arab region to make use of the available of which: sulfur, phosphate, iron, glass sand, copper, rare elements and uranium, in an attempt to discover new sources after the scientific development witnessed in the field of searching, excavating and remote sensing.
- 4) Establishing Arab engineering companies, encouraging the scientific research and focusing on conducting common researches for the service of fertilizer industry and its applications.
- 5) Making use of and directing part of the locally available and emigrating Arab money surplus for investing in and financing agricultural integrating projects and producing different kinds of fertilizers in addition to agricultural seeds.
- With reference to the current International Conference, we, in supporting the technological aspect of the Arab fertilizer industry, have worked on inviting many international experts and others from the Arab region to present the latest and best scientific experiences in this regard and to exchange expertise and accumulative knowledge among AFA members.
- Thus, the Conference is convened amidst such circumstances and developments and in harmony with AFA goals, seriously seeking the enhancement of Arab fertilizer industry status and competitiveness and strengthening the coordination and cooperation method among Arab companies and related international institutions; so as to achieve a number of objectives:
 - Continuing the flow of fertilizers to international markets without delay or stopping in addition to diversifying fertilizers according to the regional and international demand requirements.
 - Following up all developments accomplished in fertilizer industry engineering and technological fields and using the best available technologies.
 - Encouraging scientific research targeting fertilizer industry service.
 - Supporting and building the specialized administrative and technical capacities for such an industry via conducting specialized workshops.

- Following up the rapid changes affecting the world climate and the global warming and its impact on both Man and environment. Emphasizing on the concept of environment, health and safety as a culture, method and practice to preserve both Man and environment. Applying the best methods related to health, safety and preserving both Man and environment. Increasing the investments in such a field for the protection of the society. So, AFA has launched an annual prize in such a field to raise the competition between the Arab factories in this concern; 9 factories are currently competing on 2011 prize, the winner of which will be announced during the Conference.
 - Encouraging member companies to use the renewable energy means and emphasizing on the necessity of using the available of which and lessening the dependence on the fossil fuel.
 - Urging on rationalizing water usage and supporting related researches. Searching for the best methods to reduce water usage in industry, as water represents the pillar stone of economic and social development. Taking in consideration the existing and escalating competition between using water for potable, agricultural and industrial purposes in an Arab region considered one of the driest regions and the most decreasing in rainfall rates and water reservoir.
- I would like to highlight the efforts exerted by AFA members, namely abiding by local and international legislations and standards so as to raise the production units' efficiency and reduce energy consumption in all production phases, aiming at promoting Arab companies competitiveness together with preserving the environment. Such efforts have borne fruit as underscored by the 2010 benchmarking study conducted by an independent international organization for more than 37 Arab fertilizer industry production units. The study proved the said units' application to the best regional and international practices and commitment to the best stipulated standards.
 - Therefore, the objectives and directions aforesaid were taken in consideration when choosing the Conference topics; selecting working papers in line with such objectives together with specialized international speakers and experts and successful applied cases and industrial treatments followed by Arab companies in both production and environment and vocational safety fields. This effort reflects the decision-takers knowledge of Arab fertilizer industry value and being prepared to go on forward in its leading role as a developmental and social momentum on the Arab countries' level and even developing such a role as a major supplier of fertilizers internationally and providing the highest levels of quality and commitment.

- At the end, I welcome on your behalf the speakers, experts and international companies participating in the accompanying exhibition. Wishing such a 3-day scientific gathering, serious discussions, recommendations and directions highlighting the strategic and future role of fertilizer industry in creating job opportunities, supporting efforts to narrow hunger gap and achieve the required food security.
- I further seize such a sublime scientific scene to extend my thanks again to the sponsoring companies.
- I also would like to express my gratitude to AFA specialized committees and secretariat for their contribution together with the assisting teams from both Potash and Phosphate Jordanian Companies in accomplishing such an international specialized conference.

Best Regards

Dr. Shafik Ashkar
Secretary General