



**Dr. Shafik Ashkar**

**Secretary General**

- **Your Excellency Mr. Tahar Khouaja**  
Chairman & CEO of Compagnie des Phosphates de Gafsa /  
Groupe Chimique Tunisien & TIFERT
- **Your Excellency Hedhili Kefi**  
Representative of Tunisian Fertilizer Industry, AFA Board Member
- **Your Excellencies AFA Chairman and Board Members**
- **Arab Companies Chairmen**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

**Distinguished Attendants**

With great pleasure, allow me to welcome you all on the cherished land of Tunisia, emphasizing AFA keenness upon coordinating with the pioneering and strategic fertilizer industry sector in Tunisia, reflecting our appreciation to Tunisian companies'

role, support and belief in AFA objectives and devotedly enhancing common Arab work path; thus honoring Tunisian companies for embracing such an international technological gathering;

**Wishing Tunisia and Tunisians all good and success ...**

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Fertilizer industry occupies a remarkable status among other industrial sectors in the national economy of many countries. From one side, it is considered to be the chain of connection within excavation and raw materials industries, for instance phosphate, potash, sulphur and gas. And from the other side it is the most important pillar for agriculture sector developments, playing a developmental social role as an essential source of food and being the cornerstone of the international pursuit for world food security achievement.

Arab fertilizer industry path, extending back to more than 100 years, has witnessed a remarkable evolution since embarking on phosphate ore mining in Tunisia in 1895. Taking in consideration, the constant work on oil and natural gas sector production and development, the Arab region hence experienced a tremendous leap in fertilizer production in line with increasing the related capacities. Therefore, Arab fertilizer industry occupied an international leading and distinguished position on fertilizer industry map. It is noteworthy that fertilizer industry and returns are of major importance in the economies of Arab countries specialized in producing and exporting fertilizers and related raw materials.

The most persisting challenges facing the human being are undoubtedly the production and provision of main food requirements. Thus, increasing agricultural productivity, from limited land areas, requires certainly rational and steady increase in agricultural fertilizer usage. Such endeavor needs resorting to verified scientific applications based

on agricultural researches concerned with handling agricultural fertilizers in order to ensure the promotion of agricultural productivity and the attainment of higher agricultural crop yields without adding further burdens to the environment.

Noticeably, fertilizers contributed in raising agricultural productivity internationally by 45%, especially with reference to strategic food crops, like wheat, rice and maize; having a clear impact on providing and boosting international food system, the matter emphasizing the present and future leading role of such an industry.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Convening our Conference under the theme **Applying Best Practices in Fertilizer Industry** comes in line with the required needs to promote such an industry. To illustrate, it has been pinpointed that such an industry products are abiding by international quality criteria and committed to environmental standards; the matter expressed in using resources efficiently, raising effectiveness, improving performance and developing production and quality processes. These efforts were applied targeting reducing costs, achieving aspired progress, communicating distinctive experiences and applying the best technological developments for the promotion and sustainability of such an industry.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that some Arab companies have achieved a distinct status in the field of operation, maintenance, safety and human resources development applications, consequently received certificates of appreciation and international recognition. To elaborate, **IFTDO** granted awards for the best human resources development practices, **US Safety National Council** provided **Robert Kimble Award for Health, Safety and Environment Practices** and **UK Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents** too presented **Sir George Earl Award for Health, Safety & Environment practices**.

The considerable attendance of more than 350 participants, from 27 countries, representing 85 companies working in fertilizer industry field, is an actual reflection of the importance paid to such an event regionally and internationally. It further highlights the appreciation given to Arab fertilizer industry role being a regional framework for an Arabian Conference encompassing fertilizer and related materials producers and exporters together with industrial licensees, technological and international companies working in such a field, which are always eager to join such an annual event.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

Therefore, AFA seeks via such a Conference and the tangible international presence to follow the latest developments in fertilizer industry engineering and technological fields. AFA also aims at updating, developing and using the best available technology in addition to encouraging and supporting the fertilizer industry oriented scientific research and paying due concern to the administrative and technical capacity building of such an industry staff.

The Conference program includes 26 working papers submitted by international and Arab companies tackling the following issues:

- Stating the best technological methods (BAT) used in fertilizer production and increasing productivity
- Improving energy usage efficiency in fertilizer industry
- Identifying the existing factories challenges, debottlenecking and rehabilitation needs together with increasing productivity and reducing energy consumption
- Determining the latest technology related to phosphogypsum
- Discussing Uranium and rare elements found in phosphate ore
- Shifting from being reactive to being pro-active in the maintenance processes

- Entrenching the culture, methodology and practice of Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) in the minds of fertilizer industry stakeholders in order to protect the human being, machines and the surroundings in one integrated unit
- Including other case studies provided by Arab companies reflecting such companies distinguished status in fertilizer industry field

Fertilizer industry is considered to be a pivotal field on the economic, developmental and social levels having a permanently maximizing role. We, as AFA members, are keen upon diligently working on developing our industry, applying the latest developments, raising efficiency and saving and periodically reviewing costs so as to reach the highest production rates, thus, achieving sustainable development.

**Finally, I would like to thank you all for your kind attendance and all appreciation to the generous sponsorship provided by the Tunisian companies and the hospitality surrounding AFA activities in Tunisia.**

Best Regards

Dr. Shafik Ashkar  
Secretary General

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