

The new Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development Business Centre

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In its efforts to strengthen partnership and maintain a fruitful cooperation with all relevant government bodies, as well as to streamline licensing procedures and provide a package of facilities and technical and legal services in trade,

investment and business, the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development (“ADDED”) has recently launched its new Abu Dhabi Business Centre (the “Centre”).

The Centre is a one-stop shop business centre that aims to ease and speed up license issuing and renewal procedures, and further coordination and integration with other government bodies concerned with economic activity in the emirate. Through its one-stop shop Centre, ADDED aims at enhancing its time required to obtain commercial licenses.

The Centre was opened on 3rd January 2013 and is in line with the objectives and parameters of the Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030. It is a single government interface for investors and businessmen, through which ADDED plans to increase the number of registered businesses in the emirate by 10%.

The new Centre is ideally located at ADDED’s headquarters in the heart of the city with ample parking spaces available within the proximity of the building. The state of the art newly built Centre is divided into five different zones spread across two spacious floors, and has been designed to incorporate various facilities and features including spacious waiting areas, visible front desk, reception areas, ATM machines, a branch of National Bank of Abu Dhabi and free WI-FI internet.

The Centre offers three main services namely, commercial licensing and registration services, interactive services by offering consultation and support to companies and investors and offering valuable information for strategic customers and partners in Abu Dhabi concerning the business environment in the emirate. The ADDED licensing services provided by the Centre are properly distributed into separate counters as follows:

- Customer Services;
- Trade Names;
- Advertising Permits;
- Inspection Services;
- Commercial Licenses;
- E-services;
- Fast Track “VIP” Services; and
- Pensioners, Ladies and Special Requirements Services.

The Centre currently incorporates 16 governmental and semi-governmental bodies in providing its licensing related services, including: the Abu Dhabi Chamber, the Abu Dhabi Centre of Waste Management, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labor, the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs, the Civil Defense, the General Directorate of the Abu Dhabi Police, Abu Dhabi Customs, Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority, the Environmental Authority, local newspapers publication services, the National Media Council, the Industrial Development Bureau and the Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development. Moreover, further governmental and semi-

governmental bodies will also be included in the near future to reach a total of 45. In addition to the above entities, the Centre recently added the services of Aramex and Daman Insurance.

The Centre lately introduced an e-linkage online service allowing the carrying out of license transactions and procedures electronically. The e-linkage online service links ADDED with several governmental and semi-governmental bodies including the Abu Dhabi Chamber, the Abu Dhabi Municipality Health Department, the Department of Transport and the Supreme Petroleum Council.

The e-linkage online service achieves a strategic goal for ADDED, to turn the Center into a single business window for all transactions and procedures associated with licensing in the emirate and most importantly to facilitate and shorten the licensing procedures in the emirate.

For instance, the ADDED and Abu Dhabi Chamber recently signed a memorandum of understanding which enabled the activation of the e-linkage between the two parties, to allow the Centre to issue a unified business license and Chamber membership in one certificate bearing the logos of the two entities after completing all required procedures and documents. In the near future ADDED plans to activate the e-linkage services with all governmental and semi-governmental bodies involved in the licensing procedures.

During his tour of the Centre, Nasser Ahmed Al Sowaidi, the chairman of ADDED said: "The Centre is considered a major initiative adopted by the government of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. It has been established to reshape the business environment aligned with international standards and comes as part of a comprehensive strategic plan focused on the development of various economic sectors".

ADDED is hopeful that the services provided by its new Centre will be able to increase its efforts to include 90% of the entities involved in commercial licensing by the end of 2013 as well as to reduce the number of procedures for licensing and save time and effort for companies, establishments, investors and clients inside and outside the UAE.