

USQBC Doha and IFC Convene High-Level Dialogue on Accelerating Qatar's Startup Ecosystem



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DOHA, Qatar – 17 June 2026 – US-Qatar Business Council – Doha (USQBC Doha) and the World Bank Group’s private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), held a high-level event, “**Qatar as a Regional Innovation Hub: Accelerating Qatar’s Startup Ecosystem,**” to

explore evidence-based opportunities to accelerate Qatar's startup, innovation, and investment ecosystem, in alignment with Qatar's National Vision 2030 and its Third National Development Strategy (NDS3).

With QNB Group, a leading financial institution in the Middle East and Africa, serving as Lead Sponsor, the event marked the launch of "*Qatar Startup Ecosystem Study: A Roadmap for Qatar's Ecosystem Acceleration*," a white paper co-developed by USQBC Doha and IFC. The study's key findings and strategic recommendations were presented at the event, outlining actionable pathways to strengthen Qatar's positioning as a regional hub for innovation, entrepreneurship, venture capital, and scaled-up investment.

Convening senior officials, private-sector leaders, investors, leading universities, and ecosystem enablers, the session created a focused platform to connect the study's recommendations with the stakeholders best positioned to advance their implementation.

The program featured a panel discussion bringing together representatives from the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council (QRDI), the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), Builders VC, Utopia Capital, and IFC's Global Head of Venture Capital and Direct Investment to examine the paper's findings, assess the current state of Qatar's startup ecosystem, and explore the path forward; including near-term next steps and what

success could look like for Qatar's innovation landscape in the years ahead.

In her opening remarks, Sheikha Mayes H. Al-Thani, Managing Director of USQBC Doha, noted, "USQBC Doha exists to activate private sector opportunity, to move capital, talent, and ideas from conversation into commitment. Qatar's startup ecosystem represents exactly the kind of environment where that activation matters most. This white paper gives us the evidence base to engage the private sector with precision, identifying where investment is ready to move, where institutional gaps need to be closed, and where Qatar's unique position within the GCC creates advantages that no other market in the region, and globally, can replicate. Our job is to turn these findings into deals, partnerships, and growth."

Speaking on this occasion, Holly Welborn Benner, World Bank Group Country Manager for Qatar, added, "Startups are the engines of innovation, job creation, and future growth. Qatar has the ambition to become a hub for entrepreneurship and venture capital, and today's report provides an evidence-based roadmap to get there. This includes unlocking founder potential, strengthening startup quality and scale, expanding investment capacity, and accelerating links to research and academic institutions in Qatar and sector specialization."

Reflecting on the importance of strengthening collaboration across Qatar's innovation and investment landscape, Khalid Al-Sada, SEVP for Group Corporate and Institutional Banking at

QNB Group, said: “Building a globally competitive innovation ecosystem requires strong collaboration between financial institutions, investors, policymakers, and entrepreneurs. At QNB, we recognize the important role that access to capital, institutional support, and cross-sector partnerships play in enabling startups to scale and contribute to long-term economic growth. Supporting platforms such as this reflects our continued commitment to fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and private sector development in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.”

The event formed part of the ongoing collaboration under the MoU between USQBC Doha and IFC to promote evidence-based dialogue, strengthen private-sector engagement, and identify actionable opportunities that support Qatar’s national development priorities and innovation-driven economic diversification.

About US-Qatar Business Council – Doha (USQBC Doha)

USQBC Doha is a strategic platform for advancing bilateral commercial engagement between the United States and Qatar. Positioned at the intersection of business, policy, and investment, USQBC Doha enables cross-border collaboration by providing institutional access, market intelligence, and targeted facilitation to stakeholders operating across high-impact sectors.

USQBC Doha engages stakeholders through strategic dialogue, institutional partnerships, and sector-specific initiatives that align with national development goals and evolving market needs. The Council contributes to the advancement of the U.S.–Qatar economic relationship by facilitating impactful collaboration, promoting sustainable private sector growth, and enabling innovation across key industries.

About IFC

IFC—a member of the World Bank Group—is the largest global development institution focused on the private sector in emerging markets. We work in more than 100 countries, using our capital, expertise, and influence to create markets and opportunities in developing countries. In fiscal year 2025, IFC committed a record \$71.7 billion to private companies and financial institutions in developing countries, leveraging private sector solutions and mobilizing private capital to create a world free of poverty on a livable planet. For more information, visit www.ifc.org.

About QNB Group

QNB Group is a leading financial institution in the Middle East and Africa, operating a diversified international banking platform across more than 28 countries and serving millions of customers worldwide. With a strong foundation in Qatar and the GCC, the Group supports corporates,

institutions, and individuals through an extensive global network.

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