



U.S.-Israel Biotechnology Business Roundtable: Executive Summary

On May 5, 2010 the U.S.-Israel Science and Technology Foundation hosted the first U.S.-Israel Biotechnology Business Roundtable at the Hyatt Regency Chicago hotel in conjunction with the BIO 2010 International Convention. Ms. Holly Vineyard, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Middle East, South Asia and Africa and Ms. Naomi Wiegler, Middle East Trade Specialist attended the event on behalf of the U.S. Department of Commerce. Dr. Eli Opper, Chief Scientist for the Government of Israel's Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor and Dr. Ora Dar, Biotechnology Advisor to the Chief Scientist both attended the event on behalf of the Government of Israel. The well attended morning event attracted more than forty participants representing biotechnology industry, pharmaceutical industry, technology transfer offices, academic community and state economic development offices. Ann Liebschutz, Executive Director of the U.S.-Israel Science and Technology Foundation served at the meeting facilitator.

The Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS) located in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor (MOITL) in the Government of Israel, the main source of government R & D funding in Israel, has invested heavily in the life sciences and considers biotechnology to be a preferred industry. Dr. Opper recognized that Israel's ultimate success in this sector depends in no small part on taking advantage of international alliances – particularly those with the United States. The OCS has established specialized incubators for life sciences and most recently is in the process of establishing a dedicated biotechnology fund in alliance with private sector fund managers to assist with the further development of the biotechnology sector in Israel. The U.S. Department of Commerce is keen to meet the new U.S. national export initiative that challenges the U.S. to double its exports in the next five years. Like, Dr. Opper, Ms. Vineyard sees expanding two-way trade and cooperation between the U.S. and Israel as a key to achieving biotechnology economic and job growth.

The purpose of the U.S.-Israel Biotechnology Roundtable is to provide a platform for interested stakeholders from industry, academia, and government to share their views on ways to expand and improve the U.S.-Israel relationship in the biotechnology sector. The issue of expanding American led multi-national corporations R & D centers to Israel touched on topics such as the positive climate for clinical trials in Israel, intellectual property issues and Israel's encouraging environment for science. Participants noted that the U.S. remains competitive for biotechnology research and that when R & D centers are spread out too far, management can become difficult and diluted. An idea emerged that we may see more R & D cooperation agreements between multi-nationals and R & D players in diverse sectors in Israel, rather than the location of complete R & D centers in the country. Other topics considered were patent strength issues, financial credit issues and the value of collaboration of scientific exchanges that touches all level of industry and research – from large corporations to small businesses. In addition to discussing the impact of FDA regulations, a possible internship for Israel based U.S. citizens in the FDA to increase knowledge of FDA processes in Israel was also considered.

Conclusions

Following the discussions of the U.S.-Israel Biotechnology Business Roundtable, USISTF has identified four areas for further discussion and consideration in order to grow the biotechnology relationship between the United States and Israel.

1. We should use this opportunity to continue considering technical steps that need to take place to expand R & D centers of U.S. companies in Israel.
2. We need to look at ways to build off successful clinical trials in Israel to expand this industry that is beneficial to companies in both countries.
3. We should look at ways to increase all scientific exchange from the major industry and university to the small business and individual scientist level.
4. We should consider ways to increase understanding of FDA processes in order to expedite the processes of bringing products and services from Israel companies to the U.S. market. We should also consider how this can be done in light of the coming permanent FDA representation in Amman, Jordan. We might also consider bringing deeper FDA process knowledge to Israel through Israel resident U.S. citizens participating in formal FDA regulation internships.