



Newsletter January 2026

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VOICES



[Lamia Merzouki](#) highlights the [World Alliance](#) as a catalyst for global collaboration, driving impact through shared initiatives, talent strategies, and diversity.

Over the past few years, the World Alliance of International Financial Centers has expanded its initiatives. How would you assess the Alliance's impact at a global scale?

Over the past few years, the World Alliance has evolved beyond dialogue to become a true connector, strengthening multilateral cooperation by bringing

financial centers worldwide together around shared initiatives, high-level reports, and best practices.

The Alliance drives thought leadership through the development of high-level reports, such as the one on “Strategies for Attracting, Developing and Retaining Talent”. In parallel, it continues to promote diversity and gender inclusion—particularly through Women in Finance initiatives—recognizing that diverse leadership and talent pools are essential to the competitiveness, innovation capacity, and long-term resilience of financial centers.

In addition, the Alliance is currently finalizing a report on artificial intelligence in finance, reinforcing its role as a knowledge hub shaping the future of the financial industry.

Through regional platforms such as its [Africa Chapter](#), the Alliance has facilitated targeted roadshows and exchanges—such as those held in Tokyo and Hong Kong—to foster collaboration among African financial centers and enhance international awareness.

The Alliance has also played a key role in mobilizing the private sector around key continental priorities, notably the implementation of the AfCFTA. In this context, a symposium jointly organized by [Casablanca Finance City](#) and the [African Development Bank](#) in Casablanca in July 2025 helped strengthen private-sector engagement, building on the momentum of the Call to Action presented at the Africa Investment Forum 2024.

Finally, networking remains a core pillar, with business delegations and bilateral partnerships turning its diversity into concrete opportunities. This dynamic has also reinforced the Alliance’s global reach, as demonstrated by growing interest from financial centers across Europe, Asia, and Africa.

What are the Alliance’s priorities and outlook for 2026?

Looking ahead to 2026, the Alliance is preparing to launch a comprehensive impact study of international financial centers, co-led with Casablanca Finance City, designed to help members better assess and articulate their economic, social, and strategic contributions. This study will establish a robust methodology to evaluate impact at local, national, regional, and global levels, compile concrete member case studies, and highlight the collective value of the WAIFC network. The project will also produce operational recommendations to help members improve performance, visibility, and stakeholder engagement.

In addition to this initiative, the Alliance will continue its efforts to broaden its footprint and enhance the relevance of financial centers in a rapidly evolving global economy. This includes deepening international cooperation across regions, promoting sustainable finance, supporting digital innovation such as the integration of artificial intelligence, and ensuring that frameworks and dialogue processes reflect the strategic needs of both established and emerging centers. By advancing these priorities, it aims to reinforce the role of financial centers as drivers of inclusive growth, resilience, and cross-border investment.

Finally, everyone in the Alliance looks forward to the Alliance's Board Meeting and Extraordinary General Meeting in Malta in March and its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Busan, South Korea, in September, both hosted by [FinanceMalta](#) and the [Busan Finance Center](#), respectively. The AGM will bring a week full of activities for members and a stocktake of the Alliance’s progress in 2026. Furthermore, the General Meeting will decide on several membership applications recently received by the Alliance’s management.

Most likely, a number of new members will join the World Alliance, further expanding its outreach across five continents.

NEWS



WAIFC Young Academic Award 2026: Global Call for Papers

The 5th [WAIFC Young Academic Award](#) invites researchers under the age of 35 to submit papers by May 30, 2026, on topics such as Climate and Sustainability Finance, Social Impact and Inclusion, Digital Finance and Technology, or Talent and Skills for the Future.

Open to young academics worldwide, the competition offers a cash prize, global recognition, and the chance to present at the WAIFC Annual General Meeting in Busan. Submissions will be evaluated for originality, relevance, and impact. Multiple authors are allowed if at least one meets the age requirement. Applicants from all countries are encouraged to participate.

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NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS



مركز قطر للمال
QATAR FINANCIAL CENTRE

QFC Welcomes Mansoor Rashid Al-Khater as Chief Executive Officer

The [Qatar Financial Centre](#) named [Mansoor Rashid Al-Khater](#) as its new CEO on January 11, 2026.

Al-Khater, with more than 28 years of leadership experience, will drive QFC's strategic goals—aligning with [Qatar National Vision 2030](#) and boosting economic diversification. The focus includes expanding financial services, attracting wealth, and advancing digital transformation to solidify QFC's global standing. Previously, Al-Khater led major transformations at Ooredoo Tunisia and held senior roles at [Qatar Petroleum](#). The QFC aims to position Qatar as a premier destination for business growth under his leadership.

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Casablanca Finance City Strengthens African Financial Ties with 2025 Africa Tour

[Casablanca Finance City](#) (CFC) wrapped up its second Africa Tour in Accra, Ghana, following stops in Benin and Togo, fostering cross-border financial collaboration and investment opportunities.

The tour facilitated high-level meetings, including talks with [Ghana's Investment Promotion Centre](#) (GIPC), enabling participants to build strategic networks and share insights. Delegates returned to Casablanca with new partnerships and actionable prospects, underscoring CFC's role as a bridge for African economic growth. The initiative highlighted CFC's commitment to connecting African markets and driving regional investment.

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Malta Stronger Together: Strengthening UK-Malta Financial Partnerships

[FinanceMalta](#) hosted “Malta Stronger Together” in London on November 27, uniting top financial leaders from Malta and the UK to showcase Malta's competitive, innovation-driven financial sector.

The event emphasized Malta's rapid economic growth—74% since 2015—and its strengths, such as Europe's largest shipping registry and a booming fintech scene. FinanceMalta spotlighted opportunities to deepen UK-Malta financial ties, with Minister Clyde Caruana reaffirming Malta's commitment to cross-border collaboration and EU market access. A featured video underscored Malta's Vision 2050, positioning the island as a trusted, well-regulated hub for sustainable growth.

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\$6bn raised through the Astana International Financial Centre in 2025 and over 1,400 new companies were registered

The [Astana International Financial Centre](#) (AIFC) reported record growth in 2025, attracting \$6 billion in investments—\$2.9 billion more than 2024—and raising its total economic contribution to \$20 billion since 2018.

AIFC expanded its global footprint, registering over 1,400 new companies (totaling 4,900 from more than 90 countries) and launching innovative platforms like the Aviation Finance Hub and [AIFC Data Marketplace](#). The [AIFC Court](#) and [International Arbitration Centre](#) handled 1,282 cases, while the [Astana International Exchange](#) (AIX) reached \$2 billion in trading turnover and pioneered groundbreaking listings, including Central Asia's first spot Bitcoin ETF and a dual listing with Hong Kong.

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TheCityUK

TheCityUK launches new initiative to meet UK Defence and Resilience needs

[TheCityUK](#) has launched its new Defence and Resilience Group (DRG) to address funding and policy challenges in UK defense, aligning with the government's Strategic Defence Review and its call for greater private investment.

Co-chaired by [KPMG's Joe Cassidy](#) and General Sir Richard Barrons, the DRG unites financial, professional services, and defence leaders to unlock private capital for startups, infrastructure, and cybersecurity—critical to national resilience. The group will collaborate with government, regulators, and industry to strengthen the UK's defense capabilities and bridge gaps in procurement and investment. At its first meeting, [Financial Conduct Authority](#) CEO Nikhil Rathi joined discussions on integrating finance, defense, and security, building on his Mansion House speech.

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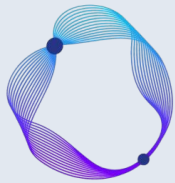
ADGM Powers Abu Dhabi's Rise as Global Finance Hub at Record-Breaking ADFW 2025

The [Abu Dhabi Global Market](#) (ADGM) hosted the landmark [Abu Dhabi Finance Week](#) (ADFW) 2025, drawing more than 35,000 global attendees and \$62 trillion in represented assets.

The event cemented Abu Dhabi's status as the "Capital of Capital," with ADGM attracting 11 major financial institutions managing over \$9 trillion and securing high-profile office openings from [UBS](#), [KKR](#), [Binance](#), and others. ADGM also set a global benchmark by granting Binance the first global crypto license and launching the "Majarra" capital markets

ecosystem. The week's \$1.9 billion polio eradication pledge and 82 new MoUs further showcased ADGM's role in blending finance, innovation, and philanthropy, solidifying Abu Dhabi as MENA's top financial hub.

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Future
Finance
Poland

AML Rules Strain Customer Experience: Future Finance Poland Analysis Highlights Challenges and Solutions

[Future Finance Poland](#)'s latest analysis, led by [mBank's Monika Szpakowska](#), reveals how expanding AML/CFT rules are complicating customer experiences at financial institutions.

Clients face frustration with repeated information requests, complex UBO verification, and unclear documentation—especially when dealing with cross-border ownership and rapidly changing corporate structures. The [article](#) underscores the operational tightrope banks walk: meeting tougher regulations without alienating customers, as seen in dropping satisfaction scores. Szpakowska argues that proactive education and transparent communication about AML requirements are key to easing customer frustration and maintaining trust.

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DIFC Solidifies Dubai's Position as a Global Hub for Digital Economy by Strengthening Privacy Governance and Promoting Inclusive Cross-border Trade

The [Dubai International Financial Centre](#) (DIFC) became the first MEASA region jurisdiction to join the [Global Cross-Border Privacy Rules Forum](#), marking a milestone outside the Asia-Pacific and reinforcing its leadership in global data privacy standards.

This membership, announced at a workshop in the Philippines, aligns with DIFC's push for trusted, interoperable privacy frameworks and supports the [UAE Digital Economy Strategy](#) by enabling secure cross-border data flows. DIFC CEO [Arif Amiri](#) highlighted the Centre's robust data protection laws, which govern over 8,000 registered companies, and its pioneering 2023 AI data processing regulation—Regulation 10—setting regional benchmarks for ethical AI and generative tech.

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For additional news articles on WAIFC and its members, please subscribe the [weekly newsletter](#) of our Managing Director.

EVENTS



FSDC Talent Day 2025

FSDC Talent Day 2025 brings together leaders from finance and fintech to share insights, trends, and opportunities shaping the future of work. Network with leaders driving innovation and AI adoption in finance, gain practical insights into how AI is reshaping the financial landscape, and discover emerging roles and key skillsets essential for your career paths.

January 23, 2026. HKEX Connect Hall, 1/F, Two Exchange Square, Central, Hong Kong

► [More information](#)



Workshop - Connecting Asia and Europe: Asset & Wealth Management, Green Finance and Digital Assets

[Luxembourg for Finance](#) invites you to “Connecting Asia & Europe: Asset & Wealth Management, Green Finance and Digital Assets”, an exclusive workshop in Hong Kong on 26 January 2026. Featuring three parallel sessions and a networking drink, the event will explore the future of asset management, sustainable finance, and digital innovation. Participation is by invitation only.

January 26, 2026. Grand Hyatt Hong Kong, 1 Harbour Road, Hong Kong

► [More information](#)



Asian Financial Forum 2026

The Asian Financial Forum (AFF) is the region's premier platform that brings together influential leaders from government, finance, and business communities globally for ground-breaking discussions and exchange of insights on the global economy from an Asian perspective.

January 26 to 27, 2026. Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, 1號 Expo Drive Hong Kong, HKI Hong Kong

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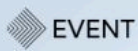


27th Annual IBA Arbitration Day Conference

The 27th IBA Arbitration Day, titled "New Horizons," will focus on new technologies, new types of disputes, the influence of new sectors and geographies (space, smart cities, green hydrogen!) on the evolution of International Arbitration, and how to stay abreast of these developments.

January 28 to 30, 2026. Rosewood Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

► [More information](#)



Derivatives Day Dubai 2026

| Details:

- 📅 Wednesday 28 January 2026
- 🕒 3:00pm – 8:30pm
- 📍 New York Ballroom, Waldorf Astoria DIFC

Derivatives Day Dubai 2026

We are delighted to announce that Derivatives Day Dubai will be returning for its sixth edition on Wednesday, 28 January. The program will feature forward looking discussions that reflect the growing sophistication of regional markets and underscore Dubai's expanding role in the global derivatives landscape.

January 28, 2026. New York Ballroom, Waldorf Astoria DIFC, Burj Daman, Al Mustaqbal Street, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

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AIMA Middle East Forum 2026

AIMA Middle East Forum 2026

DIFC, in partnership with the [Alternative Investment Management Association](#) (AIMA), will host the AIMA Middle East Forum 2026. Join the region's policymakers, investors and asset managers to explore key trends shaping the alternative assets ecosystem in the UAE and wider region.

February 3, 2026. Kempinski Central Avenue, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

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Future of Asset Management Middle East

[Future of Asset Management - Middle East](#)

[DIFC](#) is the exclusive Financial Center Partner of the Future of Asset Management - Middle East event, hosted by the [Financial Times](#) in collaboration with [MandateWire](#). The conference will convene regional and global leaders to explore the key forces transforming the asset management industry across the Middle East, from product innovation and regulatory developments to evolving capital flows and strategic allocation trends.

February 10 to 11, 2026. Mandarin Oriental Jumeirah, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

► [More information](#)



[Inclusive FinTech Forum 2026](#)

The Forum is a unique collaboration between [Kigali International Financial Centre](#), Rwanda's financial center facilitating international investment and cross-border transactions in Africa, the [National Bank of Rwanda](#); Rwanda's Central Bank, and [Global Finance & Technology Network](#), a company set up by the [Monetary Authority of Singapore](#) to advance fintech in the digital economy.

March 10 to 12, 2026. Kigali Convention Centre, Kigali, Rwanda

► [More information](#)

The banner features a stylized world map composed of dots in shades of purple and blue, with a bright light source in the center creating a starburst effect. On the right side, there is a dark blue vertical panel with white text and icons.

TheCityUK
International
Conference 2026

Conference
23 April 2026
09:00 - 13:10 BST

Register now →

[TheCityUK International Conference 2026](#)

[TheCityUK](#)'s International Conference 2026, sponsored by [Freshfields](#), will bring together senior leaders from across the financial and related professional services industry, policymakers and regulators to focus on how the UK can assert itself as a world-leading, international financial center in a new age of global competition.

April 23, 2026. Convene, 200 Aldersgate, EC1A 4HD, London, UK

► [More information](#)

The banner features a cityscape with modern skyscrapers under a clear sky. In the top left, there is a logo consisting of several parallel lines forming a square shape, followed by the word 'EVENT'. In the top right, there are logos for 'with. Intelligence S&P Global' and 'DIFC'. The main text is centered and reads 'Hedge Fund COO Summit Middle East' in a large, bold, black font.

EVENT

with. Intelligence S&P Global | DIFC

Hedge Fund COO Summit Middle East

[Hedge Fund COO Summit Middle East](#)

With Intelligence, in partnership with the [Dubai International Financial Centre](#), is hosting the Hedge Fund COO Middle East Summit exclusively for hedge fund managers in and around the UAE. The event will offer fund leaders an opportunity to network with peers and gain insights into how others are opening offices, expanding their operations and benefitting from having a base in the Middle East.

May 6 to 7, 2026. DIFC Conference Centre, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

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[Dubai Fintech Summit 2026](#)

Prepare for the landmark 2026 edition of the Dubai Fintech Summit, organized by [Dubai International Financial Centre](#). This global gathering connects markets and drives economic transformation, bringing together the world's leading innovators, policymakers, and influencers to shape the future of fintech and finance.

May 11 to 12, 2026. Madinat Jumeirah, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

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A banner for the Future Skills Conference 2026. The left side features a vibrant, abstract graphic with purple and blue tones, showing a perspective view of a tunnel or a path leading towards a bright light. The right side is a dark blue rectangular box containing white text. The text reads: 'TheCityUK and Financial Services Skills Commission Future Skills Conference 2026'. Below this, it says 'Conference' followed by a calendar icon, '21 May 2026', a clock icon, and '09:00 - 13:00 BST'. At the bottom right of the box is a white button with the text 'Register now' and a right-pointing arrow.

[TheCityUK and Financial Services Skills Commission Future Skills Conference 2026](#)

Organized in partnership with [Financial Services Skills Commission](#), the 2026 Future Skills Conference will bring together industry leaders, policymakers and emerging talent to explore how disruptive technologies are reshaping financial and related professional services, the skills required to harness this change and the actions needed to secure the UK's long-term competitiveness.

May 21, 2026. Convene, 200 Aldersgate Street, EC1A 4HD, London, UK

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DOWNLOADS

Publications

- [Report on Strategies for Attracting, Developing, and Retaining Talent](#)
- [Whitepaper on Crafting the Digital Sustainability Reporting Ecosystem](#)
- [Report on Women in Finance - Compendium of Good Practice](#)
- [Report on Art - An Integral Ingredient for Financial Centers](#)
- [Whitepaper on Enhancing Supply Chain Finance for the Promotion of the Green Transformation](#)
- [Report on How Leading Financial Centers Advance Financial Inclusion and Literacy](#)
- [Report on Supporting Ecosystem for Sustained Recovery and Growth of SMEs](#)
- [Whitepaper on the Future of Financial Centers](#)

Institutional

- [World Alliance Presentation](#)

The [World Alliance of International Financial Centers \(WAIFC\)](#) is a non-profit association registered in Belgium, representing 27 leading international financial centers. Its members are government agencies, associations, and similar institutions developing and promoting their financial centers. WAIFC facilitates cooperation between financial centers, exchanging best practices, and communication with the general public.

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