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ENOC's inaugural Middle East Retail & Downstream Conference throws spotlight on sustainability and innovation in the region

Dubai, UAE - Industry experts at the inaugural Middle East Retail & Downstream Conference (MRDC) agreed that sustainability and innovation should be at the core of all fuel retail and downstream operations across the region.

Panellists from leading fuel retail operators such as ENOC, ADNOC Distribution, Emarat, [Bahrain Petroleum Company](#) (BAPCO), Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO), and other leading fuel retailers in the region, addressed industry challenges such as increasing fuel demand, limited margins, fluctuation of oil prices, laws & regulations, the shift in customer demands and the future of the traditional service stations.

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[Zaid Alqufaiji](#), Managing Director, [ENOC Retail](#) and conference Chair, discussed the UAE's lead across the region in lifting fuel subsidies and the effects of deregulated oil prices on ENOC's operations, and how it has accelerated growth in terms of the expansion of its retail network.

Alqufaiji said, "Over the last six decades, we have witnessed a major shift in the country's infrastructure that dictated a need for the industry to evolve. We've also observed a gap in the market for industry platforms that shed light on challenges and opportunities in the fuel retail sector. As a result, ENOC partnered with Conference Connection to host the first edition of MRDC. The conference was a great success as it brought light on the global trends and dynamics of fuel retail by bringing together leading industry experts from around the world to share their valuable insights."

During the two-day conference, Taher Diab, Senior Director of Strategy & Planning, from the Supreme Council of Energy, shared their plan of driving sustainable growth in the region and its aim to increase the use of clean energy sources in Dubai by 7% by 2020, 25 per cent by 2030 and 75 per cent by 2050 through Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), biofuel, solar powered stations and electric vehicles.

Other key topics of discussions included Dubai's green mobility initiative - a government approach to promote hybrid and electric vehicles, trends in global fuel retail business and empowering digital transformation for forecourt and retail operations. The conference also highlighted the importance of technologies to thrive in the fuel retail business and contribute to its sustainable growth.

Zaid Alqufaiji further added: "It is important not to look at fuel retail as just a business – it is a key infrastructure for the country, and we need it to keep pace with the development of the nation. The industry has gradually evolved to offer 'smart' solutions to enhance customer experience. As a result, we identified sustainability, innovation and technology as key drivers that have contributed to expanding our network operations."

While day one of the conference focused on key trends and innovation in fuel retail, day two emphasised on the evolution of non-fuel business; the convenience store model, expansion of food & beverages and restaurant business in service stations and customer patterns and behaviour in relation to service station forecourts. The conference ended with a visit to ENOC's and the UAE's first solar powered service station at Dubai Internet City, where all delegates got to see the latest smart innovations on site.

The MRDC 2017, part of the Middle East Petroleum & Gas (MPGC) week, was held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, and was opened by His Excellency Dr. Matar Hamed Al Neyadi, Undersecretary of UAE Ministry of Energy, and chaired by Zaid Alqufaidi, Managing Director of ENOC's retail business.