



MINI WHITE PAPER 2 OF 3

Benchmarking High-Performing SEZs

Global Lessons and Strategic Implications for the MENA Region

Reimagining Special Economic Zones for Strategic FDI in the MENA Region

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This publication forms part of the NurZen-IDOM White Paper Series, Reimagining Special Economic Zones for Strategic FDI in the MENA Region, developed to support policymakers, SEZ authorities, investors, and economic development stakeholders in enhancing the competitiveness and long-term impact of Special Economic Zones.

The findings, interpretations, and recommendations presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the benchmarked zones, institutions, or organisations referenced throughout the study.

1. Introduction

This White Paper has been developed through the collaboration between NurZen and IDOM, combining complementary expertise in investment attraction, Special Economic Zone strategy, infrastructure planning, and sustainable economic development. NurZen brings a specialized perspective on global investment trends, FDI competitiveness, and SEZ positioning and operations, while IDOM contributes its multidisciplinary experience in strategic advisory, engineering, urban and industrial planning, and the implementation of complex development projects across international markets. Together, both organizations are developing a series of insights to support policymakers, SEZ authorities, and investors in reimagining Special Economic Zones as competitive platforms for strategic FDI across different regional contexts.

2. Executive Summary

CONTEXT

[White Paper 1](#) established that global investment patterns are undergoing profound transformation, driven by geopolitical realignment, supply chain diversification, digital transformation, and sustainability imperatives. These shifts are reshaping investor expectations and intensifying competition among investment destinations. For MENA economies, this creates both opportunity and urgency: the window for repositioning Special Economic Zones as globally competitive platforms is narrow, but the rewards for doing so are substantial.

This second paper examines how leading Special Economic Zones have responded to these changes and identifies the characteristics that distinguish high-performing SEZ ecosystems from those that struggle to attract and retain strategic FDI.

METHODOLOGY

Drawing on a benchmark assessment of leading international SEZs including – Tanger Med (Morocco), KIZAD (UAE), Sohar Free Zone (Oman), Qatar Free Zones (Umm Al Houl and Ras Bufontas), Subic Bay (Philippines), Ulsan Free Economic Zone (South Korea), Aqaba (Jordan), Klaipėda (Lithuania), and King Abdullah Economic City (Saudi Arabia) – the analysis identifies five critical success factors that consistently underpin investment attraction, operational excellence, and long-term competitiveness. These benchmarks were selected from an extensive list of 37 SEZs worldwide through a rigorous three-phase methodology evaluating industry focus, port proximity, governance quality, incentive structures, global recognition, and operational infrastructure.

KEY FINDINGS

Finding 1: Successful SEZs are built around clearly defined economic specializations and cluster-based development strategies. Zones such as Tanger Med and Ulsan demonstrate that sectoral focus, rather than broad-based industrial diversification, creates economies of scale, supplier ecosystems, and knowledge spillovers that magnify investment returns.

Finding 2: Governance quality and institutional effectiveness are increasingly important determinants of SEZ performance. Hybrid governance models combining public-sector strategic oversight with private-sector operational expertise consistently outperform purely public or purely private structures.

Finding 3: Investor experience has emerged as a major competitive differentiator. Digital One-Stop-Shop platforms, streamlined licensing, customs integration, and investor aftercare are now baseline expectations, not premium features.

Finding 4: Sustainability and innovation are becoming core elements of SEZ value propositions. Leading zones are deploying renewable energy, circular economy programmes, and carbon reduction strategies as competitive advantages and not just for compliance obligations.

Finding 5: Integrated economic ecosystems outperform standalone industrial zones. The strongest-performing zones combine industry, logistics, innovation, talent development, urban infrastructure, and business services into cohesive platforms that support investment attraction, retention, and expansion.

Strategic Implication: The future competitiveness of MENA SEZs will depend less on fiscal incentives and more on their ability to deliver specialized, digitally enabled, sustainable, and investor-centric ecosystems.

3. Benchmarking Framework

3.1 Scope and Selection Methodology

The benchmark assessment reviewed a diverse set of internationally recognized SEZs representing different geographies, economic structures, and development models. A rigorous three-phase selection process was applied: identification of 37 comparable SEZs globally, application of knockout criteria (industry focus and port proximity), and evaluation using seven weighted criteria including regulatory quality, incentive depth, global recognition, governance model diversity, and operational infrastructure sophistication.

The final benchmark included seven primary case studies plus three supplementary zones, providing a comprehensive cross-regional perspective:



Figure 1: Benchmark SEZ Selection

3.2 Assessment Dimensions

Each benchmark zone was evaluated across four integrated dimensions designed to capture the full spectrum of SEZ competitiveness:

Dimension	Scope of Assessment
Industry Profile	General information, anchor tenants, key differentiators, customer reach, sector-specific enablers, and value chain integration
Governance Model	Regulatory framework, private sector engagement, organizational structure, three-level governance analysis (strategic, tactical, operational), and incentive architecture
Operations & Investor Services	One-Stop-Shop platforms, digital infrastructure, customs integration, management portals, value-added services, shared facilities, and logistics connectivity
Sustainability & Innovation	Renewable energy deployment, circular economy programs, ESG and UN SDG compliance, performance monitoring indicators, knowledge-sharing networks, and R&D ecosystems

Table 1: Assessment Dimensions

The benchmark methodology draws on international standards for SEZ KPIs, including UNCTAD’s sustainable development impact assessment framework and GASEZ ESG reporting guidelines, ensuring findings are both globally comparable and policy relevant.

4. Finding 1: Competitive SEZs Are Built Around Specialization

One of the strongest findings from the benchmark is that successful SEZs rarely attempt to serve all industries simultaneously. Instead, they establish a clear economic identity and develop specialized ecosystems around strategic sectors. This cluster-based approach creates powerful economic multipliers: economies of scale reduce per-unit costs, supplier ecosystems deepen local value chains, talent concentration builds specialized labour pools, and knowledge spillovers drive continuous innovation.

The evidence from the benchmark is compelling. For example, Tanger Med has built its competitive advantage around a tightly integrated automotive-logistics-trade facilitation cluster. By focusing on these three interconnected sectors, Morocco has transformed a stretch of Mediterranean coastline into Africa’s largest port complex and a globally competitive export platform.

KIZAD demonstrates how specialization in industrial manufacturing, coordination, and downstream metals processing can leverage geographic advantage and multimodal connectivity. With 100% foreign ownership permitted and integration with Abu Dhabi’s broader industrial strategy (Operation 300bn), KIZAD has attracted major multinational tenants across its priority sectors.

Sohar Free Zone has anchored its proposition around petrochemicals, logistics, and energy-intensive industries, exploiting Oman’s access to competitive energy costs, deep-water port infrastructure, and strategic location on the Strait of Hormuz.

Ulsan Free Economic Zone in South Korea provides perhaps the most advanced example of sectoral specialization, with five dedicated districts including a Hydrogen Industry Hub, Electrogenic Auto valley, R&D Business Valley, Energy Convergence District, and Northeast Asian Oil and Gas District, all designed to attract investment across the full hydrogen and energy value chain. Ulsan’s model demonstrates how deep specialization, combined with co-located R&D and production facilities, attracts both established multinationals and innovative SMEs.

Specialization in Practice: Benchmark Evidence

SEZ	Core Cluster	Key Outcomes
Tanger Med (Morocco)	Automotive, logistics, trade facilitation	Africa’s largest port; 90% renewable energy target by 2030; Digital Factory initiative; Smart Zone platform
KIZAD (UAE)	Industrial manufacturing, metals, logistics	100% foreign ownership; multimodal connectivity (road, port, rail, air); green hydrogen hub; multiple FT awards
Sohar Free Zone (Oman)	Petrochemicals, logistics, energy	45+ multinational tenants; dedicated port corridor; self-reinforcing ecosystem of upstream suppliers and downstream processors
Ulsan FEZ (South Korea)	Hydrogen, energy, automotive, R&D	5 specialized districts; world-leading hydrogen production research; Eco-Industrial Park certification
Subic Bay (Philippines)	Maritime, electronics, logistics	SFEX dedicated logistics corridor; ASYCUDA and ETAPS electronic tracking; converted former naval base

Table 2: Specialization Evidence from Benchmark

Strategic Implication: Future SEZ development strategies should prioritize targeted cluster development and integrated value chain creation rather than broad-based industrial diversification. Zones that create clear sectoral identities attract more committed, higher-quality investors.

5. Finding 2: Governance Is a Strategic Asset

The benchmark demonstrates that governance quality is often the decisive factor separating successful zones from underperforming ones. Effective governance encompasses clear legal mandates, dedicated regulatory authorities, strong institutional coordination, transparent decision-making, and operational autonomy. These elements combine to create the predictability and responsiveness that investors increasingly demand.

The benchmark identifies three distinct levels of governance operating within successful SEZ ecosystems. The strategic level comprises government entities that establish the country’s vision and SEZ regulatory framework. The tactical level encompasses entities responsible for implementing strategy through master planning and investment promotion. The operational level involves entities managing development,

administration, and daily zone operations. Zones where these three levels are clearly delineated and effectively coordinated consistently outperform those with blurred responsibilities.

A significant emerging trend is the adoption of hybrid governance models that combine public-sector strategic oversight with private-sector operational expertise. Qatar Free Zones Authority (QFZA) exemplifies this approach: a public body with a board composed of government ministers, yet operating with the commercial responsiveness of a private enterprise. In Lithuania, Klaipėda’s SEZ is independently controlled by its administration company while maintaining close coordination with Invest Lithuania, the national investment promotion agency, which functions as a one-stop shop for informing, connecting, and supporting foreign companies.

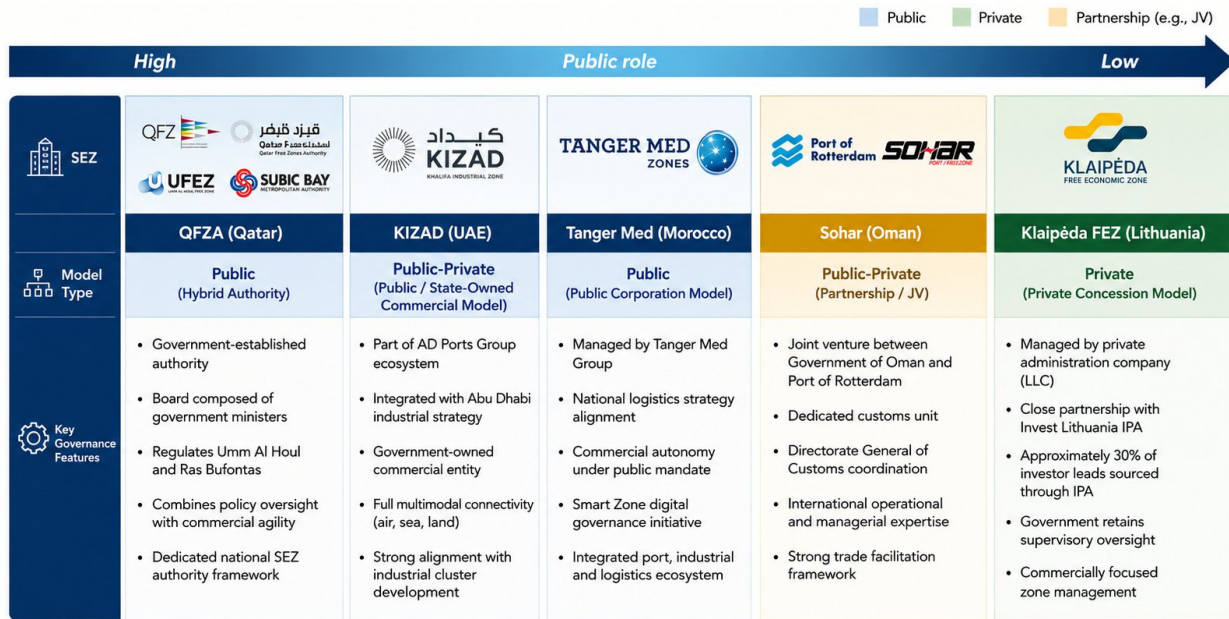


Figure 2: Governance Models Across Benchmark SEZs

The benchmark also reveals that many leading zones have a specific SEZ Act and an umbrella organization serving as the main national regulator. This regulatory architecture provides investors with legal certainty and a clear institutional framework for dispute resolution. Several benchmark zones including KIZAD (operating under Abu Dhabi’s industrial strategy), Tanger Med (under Morocco’s national logistics vision), and Sohar (under Oman’s free zone authority), all benefit from dedicated national regulatory bodies that set standards while granting individual zones operational flexibility.

Incentive Architecture

The benchmark confirms that SEZs offer a combination of fiscal and non-fiscal incentives to attract investors. Common fiscal incentives include corporate income tax exemptions for 10–30 years, 100% foreign company ownership, import and export duty exemptions, no real estate tax, and free repatriation of capital, profits, and dividends. Beyond standard fiscal incentives, leading zones increasingly provide non-fiscal “soft” incentives: financial partnerships, guidance on R&D grants and support schemes, workforce development programs, and sector-specific support services. The evidence suggests that non-fiscal incentives, especially those related to operational support and investor services, are becoming more important than tax holidays alone.

Strategic Implication: Strengthening institutional coordination and governance

effectiveness may generate greater competitiveness gains than additional fiscal incentives. The most successful SEZs invest as much in governance architecture as in physical infrastructure.

6. Finding 3: Investor Services Are a Competitive Differentiator

The benchmark reveals a clear shift from infrastructure-led competition toward service-led competition. While world-class physical infrastructure remains a necessary condition, it is no longer sufficient. Leading zones are competing on the quality, speed, and seamlessness of the investor experience they deliver. This can be from initial inquiry through licensing, construction, operations, and expansion all tailored to specific sectors and investor requirements.

Two specific digital platforms have emerged as critical components of the investor journey. The **Investor Portal (One-Stop-Shop)** is a high-functionality platform connecting investors with inter-ministerial agencies, addressing all requirements from municipality services (licenses, permits, environmental approvals) to utilities (subscription management, consumption monitoring, bill payment) and management services (business consulting, industrial planning, investment engagement). The **Goods Management Portal** complements the investor portal by supporting day-to-day operational activities: customs clearance and payments, real-time cargo data, goods traceability, transit tracking, and administrative procedures.

Tanger Med's "Smart Zones" project positions the port and its industrial zones as leaders in digital transformation, logistics efficiency, and sustainability through a dedicated Digital Factory initiative. KIZAD deploys smart technologies including goods tracking and tracing, biometric gate access, and integration with Abu Dhabi's port community systems. Sohar's Marasi platform provides an intuitive interface simplifying interactions between the port and stakeholders including marine service providers, terminals, and shipping agents.

Klaipėda provides a different but equally effective model: rather than a formal OSS, the zone operates through a Single Point of Contact (SPoC) for investors, coordinated closely with Invest Lithuania. This approach generates approximately 30% of investor leads through the IPA partnership, demonstrating that institutional coordination can substitute for physical one-stop infrastructure.

Beyond digital platforms, the benchmark shows that leading zones provide comprehensive value-added services tailored to priority industries. These include shared facilities (warehouses, laboratories, co-working spaces), build-to-suit options, logistics corridor management, and sector-specific technical support. Subic Bay's dedicated SFEX logistics corridor, monitored by real-time KPIs and electronic tracking via ASYCUDA and ETAPS systems, exemplifies how operational services can differentiate a zone.

Strategic Implication: The ability to deliver a seamless, digitally enabled investor experience is now as important as the quality of physical infrastructure. SEZs that cannot offer integrated digital platforms and proactive investor services will struggle to compete

for strategic FDI.

7. Finding 4: Sustainability Is Moving from Compliance to Competitiveness

Historically, environmental initiatives in SEZs were viewed primarily as compliance obligations. Costs to be minimized rather than capabilities to be leveraged. The benchmarking exercise demonstrates a fundamental shift where leading zones increasingly view sustainability as a source of competitive advantage, deploying green infrastructure and innovation as active tools for attracting higher-quality investment. Empirical evidence shows that strong sovereign ESG performance now correlates positively with FDI inflows in the Gulf, particularly where trade openness and governance reforms exist¹.

The benchmark evidence spans multiple sustainability dimensions as shown in the table below. Critically, the benchmark confirms that to report SEZ performance to their respective authorities, all zones should elaborate a sustainable development impact assessment on an annual basis. This assessment should consider direct and indirect economic contributions, fiscal and financial sustainability, technology and skills contributions, social and environmental impacts, support to regional integration, and policy experimentation and learning opportunities, all aligned with ESG and UN SDG standards.

Sustainability Initiatives Across the Benchmark

SEZ	Key Sustainability Initiatives
Tanger Med (Morocco)	90% renewable energy target for 2030; floating solar farm on the Oued Rmel dam; Smart Zone digital management; Digital Factory initiative for logistics efficiency and sustainability
Klaipėda (Lithuania)	De-carbonization competence centre; solar PV plants; public transport and cycling infrastructure; air monitoring; territory greening; planned wind farm; university research partnerships with leading Lithuanian institutions and the University of Groningen
Qatar Free Zones	World’s most sustainable free zone group; recycled water irrigation; lowest carbon footprint energy generation; modern green infrastructure
Ulsan FEZ (South Korea)	Leader in green hydrogen production via ammonia electrolysis; dual-functional solar hydrogen electrodes; Eco-Industrial Park certification; smart city integration
Sohar (Oman)	Dedicated environmental monitoring; Marasi digital platform for sustainability tracking; integration with Oman’s green energy strategy
KIZAD (UAE)	Green Hydrogen Hub (\$1B+ investment); carbon capture and storage; alignment with UAE Net Zero 2050 and Operation 300bn

Table 3: Sustainability Initiatives Across Benchmark SEZs

¹ [Sovereign ESG and Foreign Direct Investment in the GCC: The Amplifying Role of Trade Openness in Economic Diversification](#)

Strategic Implication: Investors increasingly consider ESG performance when evaluating investment locations. Green SEZs are likely to attract higher-quality investment and become more resilient to future regulatory changes, carbon border adjustments, and shifting consumer preferences.

8. Finding 5: Integrated Ecosystems Outperform Industrial Parks

The strongest-performing zones in the benchmark no longer function solely as industrial estates. Instead, they operate as integrated economic ecosystems that combine industry, logistics, innovation, talent development, urban infrastructure, and business services into cohesive platforms. This ecosystem model creates a virtuous cycle: diverse offerings attract a wider range of investors, interaction between tenants generates innovation, and integrated urban amenities support talent attraction and retention.

Ulsan FEZ exemplifies the ecosystem approach by co-locating its Hydrogen Industry Hub with an Electrogenic Auto valley (for hydrogen automobile parts clusters), an R&D Business Valley, and integrated urban amenities. This structure enables established energy companies, automotive manufacturers, research institutions, and technology start-ups to interact and collaborate within a single ecosystem.

Tanger Med has evolved from a port into a comprehensive industrial platform combining automotive manufacturing clusters, logistics zones, free trade zones, and a growing services sector, which is supported by smart zone management and a Digital Factory initiative. The group's digital roadmap positions the port and industrial zones as leaders in digital transformation while supporting sustainability goals.

The benchmark confirms that SEZs increasingly provide proximity to urban centres, offering access to health, education, residential, and leisure facilities. Leading zones recognize that investor decisions are influenced not only by industrial infrastructure but by the quality of life available to their workforce. Zones that integrate urban amenities, workforce housing, educational partnerships, and healthcare access report stronger talent attraction and higher investor retention rates.

The ecosystem model also extends to knowledge sharing and community creation. Leading zones invest in incubators, research centres, and university partnerships. Klaipėda works closely with Lithuanian institutions and the University of Groningen on sustainability research. Ulsan partners with local development centres for hydrogen technology. These knowledge networks create the innovation capacity that distinguishes premier zones from commodity real estate.

Strategic Implication: Future SEZ development should prioritize ecosystem creation rather than infrastructure provision alone. Zones that offer only land and tax holidays will lose to competitors that deliver integrated platforms for industry, innovation, talent, and quality of life.

9. Implications for the MENA Region

9.1 Areas of Strength

MENA economies possess several structural advantages that, if effectively leveraged, position the region to capture a disproportionate share of the global shift toward strategic FDI in resilient, diversified economies:

Strategic geographic location: MENA sits at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, offering unrivalled access to three continents. Zones like Sohar (Strait of Hormuz), Tanger Med (Mediterranean gateway), and KIZAD (Arabian Gulf hub) demonstrate how geography can be translated into competitive advantage through multimodal logistics connectivity.

Access to major trade corridors: GCC economies benefit from extensive free trade agreements and customs unions, providing preferential access to major consumer and industrial markets. The benchmark shows that SEZs with strong FTA access consistently outperform those without.

Significant infrastructure investment: National visions such as Saudi Arabia's NIDLP and Vision 2030, the UAE's Operation 300bn, Oman's Oman Vision 2040, Qatar's National Vision 2030 are channelling unprecedented capital into port infrastructure, industrial zones, logistics corridors, and digital systems.

Strong government support: MENA SEZs benefit from political commitment at the highest levels, supported by dedicated regulatory bodies such as Saudi Arabia's ECZA (Economic Cities and Special Zones Authority) and institutional frameworks that provide investors with legal certainty.

Growing logistics capabilities: World-class port infrastructure (Khalifa Port, Sohar Port, King Abdullah Port) combined with expanding rail networks, airport connectivity, and bonded logistics corridors provide the multimodal access that modern supply chains demand.

9.2 Emerging Challenges

The benchmark also highlights several challenges that MENA economies must address to translate structural advantages into sustained competitive performance:

Increasing global competition: SEZs in Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Eastern Europe are rapidly upgrading their propositions. The window for MENA zones to establish clear specialization advantages is narrowing.

Need for greater specialization: While MENA zones have invested heavily in infrastructure, many still lack the clear sectoral identities that characterize top-performing global benchmarks. The risk of competing on incentives rather than specialization remains significant.

Investor expectations regarding ESG: Multinational investors are increasingly applying ESG criteria to site selection. Zones that cannot demonstrate credible sustainability strategies, carbon reduction pathways, and SDG alignment risk losing investment to competitors that can.

Demand for digital government services: Investors now expect fully digital investor portals, integrated licensing platforms, real-time cargo tracking, and seamless customs interfaces. Zones relying on paper-based processes or fragmented digital systems will struggle to attract sophisticated investors.

Talent attraction and retention: The transition to knowledge-intensive industries requires deeper talent pipelines, specialized training programs, and quality-of-life propositions that extend beyond the factory floor.

The convergence of friendshoring, nearshoring, energy transition, and supply-chain diversification presents a significant — but time-limited — opportunity for MENA economies to reposition SEZs as globally competitive investment platforms.

10. Strategic Priorities for Future SEZ Development

The benchmark highlights five strategic priorities that should guide future SEZ development in the MENA region. These priorities are not sequential but interconnected: progress on anyone reinforces the others, while neglect of any creates compounding weaknesses.

Priority 1: Develop Specialized Industrial Clusters

Move beyond broad-based industrial zones toward clearly defined sectoral ecosystems. Identify two to three priority sectors per zone, invest in sector-specific infrastructure and services, build integrated value chains linking anchor tenants with SME suppliers, and create the specialized talent pipelines that deepen competitive moats. The Ulsan and Tangerang Med models demonstrate that specialization drives superior investment outcomes.

Priority 2: Strengthen Governance and Institutional Effectiveness

Establish clear three-level governance architectures (strategic, tactical, operational) with defined responsibilities and coordination mechanisms. Adopt hybrid models that combine public oversight with private operational expertise. Invest in regulatory capacity, dispute resolution mechanisms, and institutional coordination with national IPAs. The evidence suggests that governance quality generates greater competitiveness returns than additional fiscal incentives.

Priority 3: Create Seamless Investor Experiences

Develop integrated digital One-Stop-Shop platforms covering the full investor lifecycle from inquiry through licensing, construction, operations, and expansion. Deploy Good Management Portals for day-to-day customs, logistics, and administrative operations. Benchmark against best-in-class systems like Tangerang Med's Smart Zone platform and KIZAD's biometric-enabled smart infrastructure.

Priority 4: Embed Sustainability into SEZ Strategies

Treat sustainability as a competitive asset rather than a compliance cost. Set ambitious renewable energy targets, deploy circular economy frameworks, invest in green hydrogen, and carbon capture capabilities, and establish annual sustainable development impact assessments aligned with ESG

and UN SDG standards. Klaipėda's de-carbonization competence centre and Tanger Med's 90% renewable energy target provide actionable models.

Priority 5: Build Integrated Economic Ecosystems

Design zones as comprehensive platforms combining industry, logistics, innovation, talent development, urban amenities, and business services. Invest in R&D partnerships with universities and research institutions. Create incubation and acceleration programs for sector-specific start-ups. Ensure proximity to urban infrastructure including healthcare, education, housing, and leisure. The ecosystem model supports not just investment attraction but retention and expansion.

11. Conclusion

The benchmarking assessment confirms that the global role of Special Economic Zones is evolving rapidly and irreversibly. The most successful zones no longer compete solely through fiscal incentives or physical infrastructure. Their competitive advantage stems from a combination of ecosystem quality, governance excellence, investor-centric services, sustainability integration, and strategic specialization are the five pillars identified in this analysis.

For MENA economies seeking to attract strategic FDI and accelerate economic diversification, these findings provide a practical framework for enhancing SEZ competitiveness. The evidence is clear: zones that combine clear sectoral identities with hybrid governance, digital investor platforms, credible sustainability strategies, and integrated ecosystems will capture a disproportionate share of global investment flows.

The convergence of friendshoring, nearshoring, energy transition, and supply-chain reconfiguration has created a historic window of opportunity for the MENA region. But this window is time limited. Competitors in Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Eastern Europe are upgrading rapidly. The zones that move fastest to implement the five priorities identified in this paper will establish the structural advantages that compound over decades.

SEZs must evolve from industrial parks into strategic platforms combining specialization, governance excellence, digital services, sustainability, and ecosystem integration to attract and retain the FDI that will shape MENA's economic future.

WHAT COMES NEXT

This is the second in a three-part White Paper series on Reimagining SEZs for Strategic FDI in the MENA Region:

White Paper 1: Global Trends & Framework: Introduced the overarching framework, global FDI trends, and investor priorities.

White Paper 2: Benchmarking High-Performing SEZs: This paper. Examined global best practices and identified five critical success factors.

White Paper 3: Strategic Recommendations & Call to Action: Will present actionable recommendations, implementation roadmaps, and a call to action for policymakers, SEZ authorities, and investors.

Contact us to explore how your SEZ can be repositioned for strategic FDI attractiveness.

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Glossary

FDI	Foreign Direct Investment: cross-border investment where an individual, company, or government acquires a lasting interest (10%+ voting stock) in a business in another country.
SEZ	Special Economic Zone: designated areas where business and trade laws differ from the rest of the economy, offering incentives such as tax holidays, simplified customs, and relaxed regulations.
IPA	Investment Promotion Agency: government or quasi-government bodies tasked with attracting and facilitating FDI, providing information, streamlining approvals, and marketing the country.
OSS	One-Stop Shop: a single integrated platform or office providing all administrative services required by investors, from licensing and permitting to compliance and business support.
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance: framework for assessing corporate behaviour across sustainability, ethical, and governance dimensions.
UN SDGs	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: 17 global goals adopted by all UN member states as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity. SDGs 7, 8, 9, and 11 are most relevant to SEZ investment.
CTS	Cost-to-Serve: analytical framework assessing the total cost to serve a specific customer or sector from the investor's perspective.
KPI	Key Performance Indicator: measurable target that indicates how individuals or businesses are performing in terms of meeting their goals.
ECZA	Economic Cities and Special Zones Authority: Saudi Arabia's regulatory body overseeing SEZ development, incentive management, and investor facilitation.
Nearshoring	A business strategy where companies relocate operations to nearby countries rather than distant offshore locations, prioritizing proximity, and supply chain resilience.
Friendshoring	A supply chain strategy that relocates production to political or economic allies, emphasizing resilience and shared values over pure cost efficiency.