Speaking Engagement: Yaron Klein, CEO of Atarim, Ltd.

With the establishment of the State of Israel, development efforts were directed eastwards, and the western ocean-facing side abandoned, becoming a region a place of crime and violence. In the 1970s, the substantive change began and a development partnership was created between the government and the city through a joint corporation - Atarim. Following the renewal of Old Jaffa, efforts were directed north: building a marina in Tel Aviv, renovating the legendary Gordon pool and renewing the Levant Fair. Over the years, the coastal strip has grown, developed and upgraded as an active public space, which is a central component to the wellbeing of the city's residents and visitors. The coastline of Tel Aviv is now central to the city's identity as well as a key community resource, with the beaches as a major draw for residents and tourists alike.

Now, increasing societal pressures have coincided with a variety environmental challenges the city faces as an urban coastline, its status as one of the crowded and diverse urban countries in the OECD, and exposure to climate change impacts. The coastal population is growing exponentially, and every year millions of tourists arrive in the Mediterranean, with about a third of the world's tourism concentrated here mostly on the beach. The extent of development and its impact on natural assets led the countries of the region to try to create agreements, such as the Barcelona Convention (1976) and management mechanisms, in their capacity to balance development aspirations with nature and resources. This management framework is called ICZM - Integrated Beach Band Management, a strategic template that seeks to create consensus among stakeholders to bring partnership into management. Like many Mediterranean cities, Tel Aviv-Jaffa is addressing its challenges in line with the ICZM framework and the Barcelona Convention principles with an integrated and sustainable coastal strategy.

The ongoing struggles surrounding the development of the coast and the sea in Israel indicate, on the one hand, the need to create agreed principles for the management of the coastal strip and the sea, but raise questions about a model suited to the unique needs and characteristics of our coastline. On a daily basis, the company deals with conflicts such as development versus conservation, or quality lifestyle and leisure versus high cost of living. The company makes decisions using learning-based decision-making as a tool, using real monitoring data collected about the coastline. Atarim's coastal management strategy applies principles of environmental and social sustainability into its projects and vision. Already, it is possible to identify successes in the development of the coastal strip of Tel Aviv-Jaffa.

Yaron Klein, the CEO of Atarim, will highlight these successes, the development of the Tel Aviv coastline into a blue-green innovation zone, as well as present the decision-making model the company has developed for coastal cities. Results presented will include the integration of the coastline management bodies, creation of a vision for the coastline, sustainable development, and the various completed and ongoing projects for the city coastline including port reconstruction, renewable energy projects, improved accessibility to the sea via boardwalk renovations, and a marine monitoring and conservation effort.