



ASSISTANT TREASURER

<http://assistant.treasurer.gov.au>

**PRESS
RELEASE**

ASSISTANT TREASURER TO FOCUS ON ISLAMIC FINANCE IN MIDDLE EAST TALKS

Senator Nick Sherry, Assistant Treasurer, is in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), ahead of also visiting Qatar and Bahrain, where he will hold four days of strategic talks with senior Ministers, officials, regulators, central bankers and finance industry figures focused on Islamic finance, banking and insurance.

The Assistant Treasurer is also leading a trade delegation made up of representatives from Australian and international financial institutions, major law firms, funds management companies, investment houses and the superannuation sector.

“The Gulf region is at the heart of international Islamic finance, so on this important trip, I will be focused very heavily on high-level talks on Australia’s tax treatment, regulation, promotion and export of Islamic finance, banking and insurance,” the Assistant Treasurer said.

“Islamic finance has experienced very strong and very consistent growth, even in the face of the global financial crisis, growing at around 10% per annum for the last decade.”

“The value of worldwide Islamic financial assets was US\$822 billion in 2009 and this is projected to reach US\$1.6 trillion by 2012.”

“Moody’s Investor Services see a global market potential of at least US\$5 trillion at maturity.”

“Australia is in a great position to capitalise on this growth, particularly in the wholesale market – one of our closest neighbours is Indonesia, with the world’s biggest Islamic population and we have a global leading edge in funds management.”

“My message is that in Australia we have what the wholesale Islamic finance market is calling out for.”

“These opportunities extend across the board – to Islamic insurance, or *takaful*, and to Shariah-compliant asset-backed securities, or *sukuk*.”

The Assistant Treasurer is holding talks with senior Government Ministers, as well as with senior regulatory officials and central bankers, in each of the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain. He is also meeting with the heads of the Abu Dhabi Investment Council and the Qatar Financial Centre.

In Bahrain, one of the world’s pre-eminent centres for Islamic finance, the Assistant Treasurer will hold talks with the Secretaries-General of the General Council for Islamic Banks and Financial Institutions and the International Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions. He will also tour the Deloitte Islamic Finance

Knowledge Centre and address an Islamic finance and insurance roundtable to be attended by a range of key global Islamic finance houses.

“This visit is an important step in maintaining and building our economic and strategic relationships with these three regional partners of the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain,” the Assistant Treasurer said.

CANBERRA

26 April 2010

Media Contacts: Adam Wand (Abu Dhabi) 0414 89 89 81
Joe Scavo (Canberra) 0413 800 757