



## **Souqalkhaleej.net announces partnership with Bolero MENA**

**Alliance to provide the GCC business community with an advanced global electronic trading system that will change the way business is done**

**5th August 2002**

Souqalkhaleej.net, the first common e-marketplace endorsed by the Federation of GCC Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FGCCC), has recently announced its strategic alliance with Bolero Middle East & North Africa. The partnership will provide member organisations of the FGCCC with unlimited access to the bolero.net system, which is the only legal, secure, electronic document transfer system designed to automate, simplify and streamline the information flow associated with global trade.

"FGCCC provides a host of business tools and other broad new services to companies in the Gulf region, designed to enable maximum participation in global commercial opportunities. It is to ensure more efficient supply chains and growth opportunities for the GCC based organizations that we have set up Souqalkhaleej.net, the first common e-marketplace of countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)," said Abdullah Samhan, CEO, Souqalkhaleej.net. "This partnership between Souqalkhaleej.net and Bolero MENA will increase the productivity of the chambers of commerce and add tremendous value to the business community. Through bolero.net, the chambers of commerce will benefit from a reduction in their administrative costs and a reduction in the waiting time spent by business people in the queues at the Chambers' counters, while bolero.net's international network of banks and insurance companies will enable the Chambers to provide a better service to the businesses in the region. The benefits to the individual business person are immediately obvious; there will be a drastic reduction in the hidden costs linked to daily business procedures, all documents sent out via bolero.net are tracked and a record is kept of them for 30 years, and bolero.net guarantees that each document will reach its' intended destination. There will be no more lost mail due to bad delivery or wrong addresses. All these benefits will add value to the services we propose to the businesses operating under the FGCCC's umbrella," he added.

"This alliance between Souqalkhaleej.net and Bolero MENA offers the business community in the GCC access to a secure trading system of global standards, which would considerably minimize the cost of paperwork, streamline operations and greatly enhance efficiency," said Hussein Rifai, CEO, Bolero MENA. "bolero.net allows members to electronically transfer important official documents amongst various parties in a secure and safe environment. This global system of e-trade is a unique solution as well as being simple and inexpensive to implement and use. The vast majority of business transactions can be facilitated and the remainder can be tailored to accommodate specific features that users may require. As a result of implementing the bolero.net system, the exchange of all trade documentation between all parties, including public authorities, can be undertaken electronically." The Bolero System is built on the Core Messaging Platform



(CMP), which enables users to exchange electronic trade documents via the low cost common technology of the Internet. The system is secure, is underpinned by a unique legal structure, and is maintained by a trusted third party. Rifai went on to say, "In companies where this has been implemented the direct result has been a reduction in discrepancies in documentation throughout the trading chain, with improved data integrity, as well as a significant reduction in document processing times and courier costs. In the case of one company, total throughput time for trade documents in the financial supply chain had been reduced from some 20 days to 3-5 days. bolero.net's focus on standards, its open infrastructure and its enhanced business and technical security principles are intended to provide time efficiencies and better business processes and information exchange all across the international trade chain," he added.

With a widespread membership of 30 chambers of commerce from across the region, covering more than 500,000 companies, the FGCCC has the necessary reach and scope to implement bolero.net. Creating and processing cross-jurisdictional documentation can be alarmingly expensive. In the case of the bill of lading for example, what starts out as a trivial cost ends up accounting for nearly 20% of the total administration costs for a given transaction. Current estimates are that some 60% of trade documentation suffers from some form of error or discrepancy. Employing a central hub to match automatically and reconcile this array of documentation, replacing manual processes, can yield significant gains in the time and costs of administration, as well as reduction in the associated float.

Soukalkhaleej.net provides shared resources that allow members access to a wide range of services. The four main ones consist of a comprehensive central database for the six countries made up of a 500,000-company database, a businessperson database that will capture information for the whole region and a products database. The Business Opportunities service will inform companies about auctions, tenders and other offers. There will be an Authentication mechanism offered for both companies and business people and, last but not least, Soukalkhaleej.net will offer an Electronic Document Transfer service which will be undertaken by bolero.net. This full range of Chamber services will be available at the press of a button, providing simple and immediate access to the business community and closing the trading cycle across the region. The broad service offerings of Souqalkhaleej.net include activities outside the concept of the traditional trading environment and its support by a trusted network of national and regional chambers of commerce and industry adds to its unique value proposition.

A recent road show in May and June of this year allowed the top executives of the FGCCC and Soukalkhaleej.net to meet with the major chambers of commerce and receive their input and remarks on the project as a whole. To further build on the results of the road show, the Advisory Board - which consists of the major Chambers of Commerce - will hold their first meeting in September 2002 to discuss their strategic vision prior to the official launch of Soukalkhaleej.net in October.