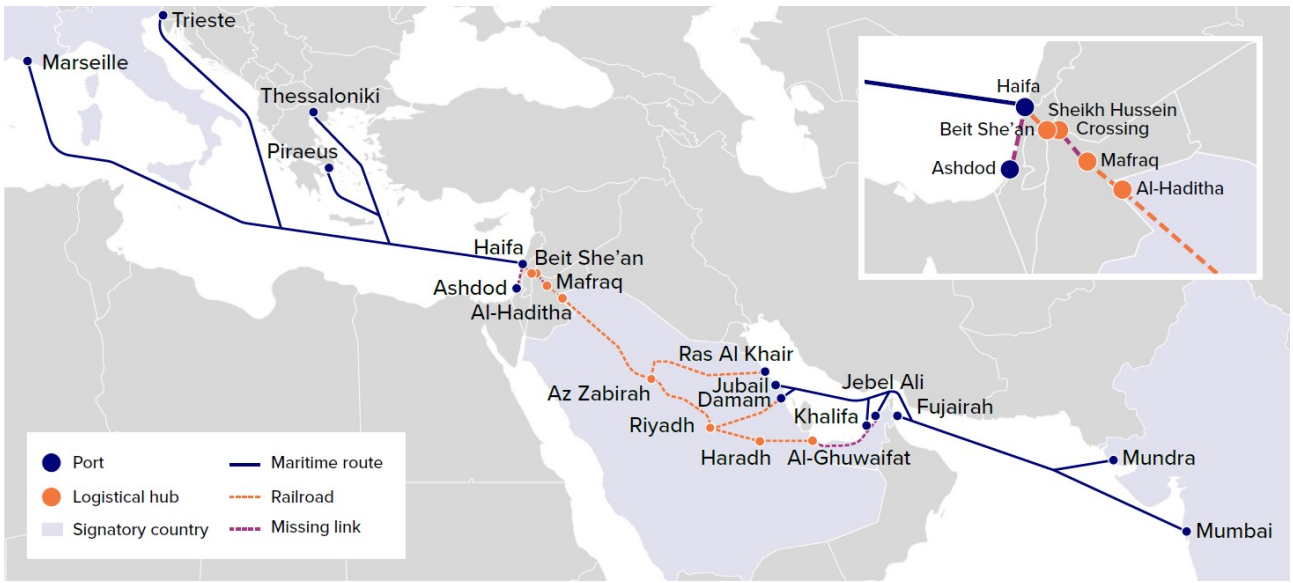
POLICY PAPER

MENA2050 · IMEC TASK FORCE

THE GOVERNANCE OF ECONOMIC CORRIDORS

A comparative analysis and possible pathways for the governance of the IMEC



The India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC): maritime routes, railroads, ports and logistical hubs

INDIA – MIDDLE EAST – EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

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NOTE ON METHOD

AI-assisted research under expert control

Several of the analytical notes consolidated in this paper were produced using an AI system (Claude Opus) to process a wide range of publicly available data, forecasts and declarations. Roger Bertozzi remains the author of the assessments: he defined the questions, controlled the methodology, managed dozens of layers of interactions with Claude AI to direct the searches and refine the data, he verified the findings and is responsible for the analysis and the policy conclusions.

Using an AI tool by a highly experienced expert represents an important contribution to research, transparency and verifiability. It is also a progress for democracy and informed public debate and decision: AI-powered research offers small organisations and NGOs resources and analytical firepower that only major, best-funded and staffed organisations could previously afford; and the resulting documents can be easily and freely cross-checked by other stakeholders and officials by screening them with AI tools — provided there is sufficient expertise to control the process and assess the pertinence of the results of the cross-check.

The word hybrid is in fashion today, and it is interesting to witness the rise of the age of the hybrid author. For the worst, such as passive AI use or plagiarism or manipulation; or for the best, AI-assisted and powered expertise, creativity and strategic foresight.

Disclaimer

MENA2050 is a civil society and policy platform that does not speak on behalf of any government. The views expressed in this policy paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the governments, institutions or organisations mentioned. Information is stated as at 8 November 2026; several files examined here are fast-moving and should be re-verified before being cited in a formal instrument.

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Executive summary

Economic corridors have become one of the defining instruments of twenty-first-century geoeconomics. Multimodal and multidimensional, they now bundle transport, energy, digital connectivity, logistics, investment and industrial development, and their multiplication is producing a new layer of international governance that sits largely outside established multilateral organisations. Yet corridors have no single legal form. As Milena Mottola shows in the *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, an economic corridor combines "a physical dimension (infrastructure) with a functional dimension (laws, policies, and institutions)", and corridors are "a compelling example of transnational regulation and multilevel governance".[1] IMEC's physical dimension is advancing segment by segment; its functional dimension is what remains to be built.

This policy paper compares the governance of some fifteen corridors and corridor regimes across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, along seven dimensions: constitutive instrument, institutional architecture, financing, harmonisation of flows, safety and security, digital and data governance, and accession. It then applies the lessons to the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), whose founding instrument, the Memorandum of Understanding of 9 September 2023, is explicitly non-binding and established no secretariat, no financing mechanism, no decision rule, no dispute settlement and no accession clause.

1 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', in A. Peters (ed.), *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law* (Oxford University Press, article last updated April 2024), paras 2 and 54. Milena Mottola's work is the principal doctrinal reference of this policy paper and is credited wherever it is used; see also M. Mottola, *Economic Corridors. Transnational Law and the Production of Space*, doctoral thesis in international law, University of Padua, 2025.

Key findings

- **IMEC is still a case of "disjointed incrementalism".** In Mottola's taxonomy, corridors range from a "legislative development model", in which a legal instrument defines the corridor and the regulatory initiatives it needs, to "disjointed incrementalism", in which actors improve infrastructure "with little coordination and no formal corridor organization or mechanism to prioritize initiatives". IMEC currently sits closer to the second. The question is how to move it to the first.
- **The OECD's first assessment of IMEC (November 2026) confirms the diagnosis.** It finds that IMEC's development depends on "building effective governance and trade facilitation frameworks", that rail plans in the Middle East reflect "varying national priorities … rather than a coordinated corridor vision", and that border-agency co-operation is "the most significant corridor-wide bottleneck". IMEC now has a Steering Committee (since 2025), five working groups, criteria for labelling "IMEC projects" and a Ports Club, all still informal and preliminary, but no secretariat, no ministerial meeting yet and little transparency.
- **Five archetypes cover the field.** Supranational-regulatory (TEN-T); treaty-based intergovernmental (Northern Corridor, TRACECA, INSTC, GMS-CBTA, Lobito-LCTTFA); political-declaratory (IMEC, BRI, PGII, Global Gateway); corporate or association-led (Middle Corridor TITR Association, Walvis Bay Corridor Group); and bank-hosted programmatic (CAREC, GMS). Most real corridors are hybrids. This typology converges closely with Mottola's classification of corridor management institutions, which "typically comprise an intergovernmental or inter-ministerial policy organ, an executive organ, and a secretariat".
- **Legal density and speed trade off, but the trade-off can be sequenced.** A memorandum of understanding is a mandate to negotiate an instrument, not a substitute for one. Corridors that do not make the transition within roughly three years rarely make it at all. IMEC passed that mark in September 2026.
- **The permanent secretariat is the load-bearing element.** Every corridor that has delivered sustained harmonisation has one; every corridor that lacks one has stalled.
- **Operators govern corridors in fact.** Instruments that do not give them a formal, advisory seat will be governed by them informally.
- **Security is being retrofitted everywhere except in the EU**, the only actor to have legally fused its economic and its defence corridors.
- **Security means continuity, and interdependence cuts both ways.** A corridor is only as strong as its weakest segment: IMEC's participants share vulnerabilities as much as opportunities, and must cooperate even in sensitive and sovereign domains. Resilience requires a prioritised map of critical assets and dependencies, scenario testing, measurable indicators and a layered framework whose primary language is protection, continuity and resilience, with defence cooperation only where required and politically feasible.
- **Security of the IMEC, security through the IMEC.** The relationship between the corridor and security runs both ways: security enables the corridor, and the corridor, through shared stakes, habits of cooperation and standing channels of dialogue, can in turn strengthen regional security and stability. Interdependence does not produce peace automatically; institutions are what make it work. This is why the governance–security nexus is fundamental.
- **Data is now a sovereignty question.** The corridor instruments of the next decade will have data chapters, and these will be the hardest to negotiate.
- **Accession clauses are the cheapest thing to draft and the most expensive to omit.** IMEC cannot admit Oman, Greece, Israel, Jordan, Egypt or Cyprus without reopening its founding document.

Recommended pathway for IMEC

- **A hybrid architecture rather than a binary choice.** Political direction through ministerial meetings and a periodic Summit; a small permanent coordination unit; sectoral groups (transport, energy, digital, trade facilitation, security and resilience); project-specific entities for implementation; and a common technical platform for standards, information and interoperability. The IMEC Organization and the IMEC Alliance remain possible long-term outcomes.
- **Short term (2026–2027): structure and open what exists.** Convene the first IMEC ministerial meeting; give the existing Steering Committee of Sherpas and Special Envoys published rules of procedure and a rotating chair; turn the Strategy, Coordination and Studies Working Group into a light technical secretariat; add a sixth Working Group on security and resilience to the existing five (strategy, coordination and studies; transport; energy; digital; financing), consolidating the cross-cutting treatment these issues currently receive within the trade, energy and digital groups; create the IMEC consultation platform on trade facilitation proposed by the OECD; publish the criteria for labelling "IMEC projects"; and associate the IMEC Ports Club as the nucleus of a Business Council; decide on the pending membership requests (Israel, Jordan, Egypt) and create an observer category for others (Greece, Cyprus, Lebanon, Oman); adopt a responsibility matrix along the implementation chain; launch a prioritised risk and dependency map, a first crisis simulation and a digital-backbone pilot; adopt the OECD Scoreboard as the baseline of an IMEC Observatory; and publish the mandates and outputs of all bodies.
- **Medium term (2027–2029): adopt an IMEC Charter.** A politically binding framework, endorsed at an IMEC Summit, consolidating the hybrid architecture and setting its long-term form, creating an IMEC Fund and project preparation facility, a Business Council with consultation rights, a performance observatory, a layered Security and Resilience Framework, and minimum resilience standards as a condition of the IMEC label and of IMEC financing.
- **Long term (2029 onwards): conclude a Framework Agreement.** A treaty establishing an IMEC Organization with legal personality, assessed contributions, technical annexes adopted by qualified majority with opt-outs, a non-self-judging security exception for data, dispute settlement and an accession clause on the Northern Corridor model.

The comparison does not point to one "best" model. It points to a combination: the *treaty-and-secretariat* backbone of the African and Eurasian corridors; the *map-amendable-by-the-political-organ* technique of TEN-T; the *modularity* of the Greater Mekong CBTA and of the DEPA digital agreement; the *blended-finance stack* of Lobito; the *operator vehicle* of Walvis Bay and the Middle Corridor; and the *observatory* discipline of CAREC and the Northern Corridor. Assembled with care and introduced in sequence, these elements offer IMEC a path from soft coordination to institutional architecture without sacrificing the flexibility that its geopolitical context demands.

1. Introduction: corridors as a new layer of governance

Economic corridors are on the rise and represent a new geostrategic and geoeconomic trend. They respond to crises as much as to technological and economic mutations: geopolitical realignments, the reorganisation of trade flows and the reconfiguration of supply and value chains. Their multiplication, expansion and evolution, and the forms of cooperation they embody, are creating a new layer of international governance, mostly outside established multilateral organisations.[2]

The India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor stands out among them as one of the most transformational projects of the century, with considerable potential for regional integration, inter-regional cooperation, trade amplification, economic security, strategic resilience, innovation-led sustainable growth and regulatory harmonisation. Against that promise, IMEC faces two intertwined deficits: an **institutional** deficit, since its governance remains emergent and non-formalised; and a **strategic** deficit, since its capacity to remain secure, resilient and reliable under disruption has scarcely been discussed in any structured international setting. The crisis in and around the Strait of Hormuz since February 2026 has turned both deficits from theoretical concerns into operational ones.

The MENA2050 IMEC Declaration of 4 February 2026 finds IMEC at an inflection point, where geopolitical conflict, heightened political risk and the lack of shared governance and financing have stalled momentum. It warns that delay is not neutral, and it calls for moving decisively from vision to implementation through modular pilot projects and, above all, through what it terms **the primacy of governance**.[3] This policy paper is a contribution to that agenda.

> **The central question**
>
> *How should IMEC be governed if it is to become a durable, scalable and resilient economic corridor rather than a collection of individual infrastructure and connectivity projects, and what can the governance experience of other corridors teach its partners?*

1.1 Scope and method

An economic corridor is treated here as a plurilateral cooperation format between States, and between States and business, rather than as a mere infrastructure alignment. Some fifteen corridors and corridor regimes are compared: the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T); the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC); the Middle Corridor and its Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) Association; the International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC); TRACECA; the Lobito Corridor; the Northern and Central Corridors of East Africa; the Trans-Kalahari and Walvis Bay corridors; the Abidjan–Lagos Corridor; the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) corridors; and the CAREC corridors. Historical regimes of navigation and transit (the Rhine, the Danube, the Suez Canal) are used as reference points, and IMEC is examined against all of them.

Seven dimensions structure the comparison: (A) genesis and constitutive instrument; (B) governance architecture; (C) financing; (D) harmonisation of flows, customs, procedures and standards; (E) safety,

2 MENA2050, *Institutionalise to Implement: Which governance and security arrangements are best fit to advance the IMEC?*, Concept note, November 2026, Introduction.

3 MENA2050, *The MENA2050 IMEC Declaration*, 4 February 2026, https://www.mena2050.org/news/the-mena2050-imec-declaration.

security and defence; (F) digital and data governance; and (G) accession and enlargement.[4] The analysis builds on the conceptual and legal framework of economic corridors developed by Milena Mottola in the *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law* and in her doctoral research, presented in Chapter 2, on the World Bank's corridor management literature, and on the MENA2050 IMEC Declaration and the MENA2050 concept note on IMEC governance and security.

The ambition is not to identify a single "best" model. More often than not, corridor governance is driven by necessity, emerging from negotiations, contexts and circumstances; and the characteristics of the signatories shape the result, since powers such as the European Union, the United States and China tend to promote their own standards. The purpose is rather to identify which elements of different models could be combined into an architecture suited to IMEC's particular characteristics, and so to inform the discussions and future negotiations on its governance.

1.2 Who governs what?

Each corridor pursues a set of policy objectives whose priority and degree of institutional structuring vary: economic development; creation and diversification of infrastructure; trade and transit facilitation; cross-border cooperation and investment; incentives for industry and services; regulatory harmonisation; territorial planning; industrial parks and free zones; and sustainability criteria. These objectives determine the relative weight of trade or investment, logistics or wider development, and the respective roles of public institutions and private actors. They also determine whether governance instruments extend into areas of sovereignty such as the security of critical infrastructure, cybersecurity and defence. The central issue is therefore not whether a corridor has "governance", but **who governs what**:

Function	The governance question	Typical holder in mature corridors
Strategic direction	Who sets strategic priorities?	Summit or Council of Ministers
Coordination	Who coordinates participating governments?	Executive Committee of senior officials
Investment	Who mobilises investment?	Fund, MDB anchor or blended-finance facility
Standards	Who establishes standards?	Technical committees; annexes to the founding instrument
Monitoring	Who monitors implementation?	Permanent secretariat and corridor observatory
Disputes and crises	Who manages disputes and crises?	Dispute-settlement clause; crisis cell; incident notification
Accountability	Who is ultimately accountable for delivery?	Council, with public annual reporting

1.3 Three interconnected levels of governance

Corridor governance operates on three levels that must be designed together:

4The comparative data are drawn from MENA2050 IMEC Task Force, *Governance of the World's Main Economic Corridors: A Comparative Analytical Matrix*, analytical working document, status as at 15 July 2026 (prepared for this policy paper), which provides the detailed matrices summarised in Part II and in the Annex. Fast-moving files were re-verified for this policy paper in November 2026.

- **Project and territorial governance**: individual ports, railway sections, logistics zones, border regions, cities and local development initiatives, typically governed by concessions, special-purpose vehicles and national authorities.
- **Intra-corridor governance**: coordination among participating States, sectors, institutions, standards, investments and levels of government across the corridor.
- **Inter-corridor governance**: coordination between a corridor and other existing or emerging corridors, gateways and maritime routes, covering competition, complementarity, interoperability and resilience.

The third level is gaining weight as corridors proliferate and interconnect, becoming a *de facto* layer of global economic governance. The first level is decisive for IMEC in particular: as the MENA2050 Declaration stresses, IMEC is not a single linear project but "a flexible constellation of intermodal segments" that can be financed, governed and developed independently, calibrated to political sensitivities.[5]

2. Economic corridors in international law: the framework of Milena Mottola

The most systematic legal analysis of economic corridors to date is that of **Milena Mottola**, in her entry "Economic Corridors" for the *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law* (last updated April 2024) and in her doctoral research at the University of Padua, *Economic Corridors. Transnational Law and the Production of Space* (2025).[6] This chapter presents her framework and draws its implications for IMEC. It provides the conceptual grid against which the comparison of Part II and the proposals of Part III are set.

2.1 Definition: a physical and a functional dimension

Mottola defines economic corridors as "geographical areas, such as overland, riverine, or maritime routes served by infrastructures that connect economic centres". Many have become the object of specific development programmes overseen by ad hoc institutions, so that the concept has come to designate "a particular spatial development model aimed at fostering economic integration that combines a **physical dimension (infrastructure)** with a **functional dimension (laws, policies, and institutions)**".[7] In the absence of a universal definition, she uses the term broadly, to include all corridors whatever their stage of evolution "from a basic transport route to a fully fledged development initiative".

The distinction between the two dimensions is the key to this policy paper. The physical dimension of IMEC (ports, railways, cables, pipelines) is advancing segment by segment, financed by States, sovereign funds and corporations. The functional dimension (the laws, policies and institutions that make these assets operate as one corridor) is what remains largely to be built. In her doctoral work, Mottola goes further: a corridor is "a bundle of norms, organizations, actors and legal instruments", which "might well be defined as an emerging legal institution", and corridors are "spatial products of legal and institutional practices".[8] In other words, **the functional dimension is not an accessory to the infrastructure; it is what makes a set of infrastructures exist as a corridor.**

5 MENA2050, *The MENA2050 IMEC Declaration*, 4 February 2026, https://www.mena2050.org/news/the-mena2050-imec-declaration.

6 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', in A. Peters (ed.), *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law* (Oxford University Press, article last updated April 2024); M. Mottola, *Economic Corridors. Transnational Law and the Production of Space*, doctoral thesis in international law, University of Padua, 2025. Paragraph numbers in the footnotes refer to the marginal numbers of the Encyclopedia entry. Milena Mottola's work is the principal doctrinal reference of this policy paper and is credited wherever it is used.

7 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 1–2.

2.2 Genealogy: from corridors of control to development corridors

Mottola traces corridors back to ancient trade routes, such as the Silk Road or the Amber Routes, which "determined the birth of cities, encouraged political cooperation, and facilitated cultural and religious cross-fertilization", a memory that the MENA2050 Declaration also invokes for IMEC. In the age of empire, trading routes became "corridors of control" and instruments of territorial acquisition; after decolonisation, newly independent landlocked States concluded transit corridor agreements with their coastal neighbours, some still in force; and the interwar period saw "corridors to the sea" involving transfers of territory, the Polish Corridor created by the Treaty of Versailles being the best-known example.[9]

The contemporary model emerged from development finance. A 1995 World Bank report explained that infrastructure investments along African transport corridors needed to be "reinforced with appropriate reforms of policies and institutions". Transport corridors were then progressively transformed into economic corridors, from the African Development Corridors launched by President Nelson Mandela in post-apartheid South Africa (notably Maputo) to the corridors promoted by the Asian Development Bank in the Greater Mekong Subregion and then in Central Asia (CAREC), and, "through a process of contagion", across Asia.[10] Mottola's doctoral research shows how this "corridor approach", originally a World Bank technique for colonial-era export routes, "migrated outside the Bank's institutional boundaries" and became an accepted State and inter-State practice "consecrated through legal means".[11] Since 2013, the Belt and Road Initiative has become "the most high-profile corridor-based development strategy globally", with six overland corridors and a maritime route.[12]

It is in this genealogy that Mottola situates IMEC: "As a counterweight to BRI's corridors, the United States, the European Union, India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, France, Germany, and Italy signed a Memorandum of Understanding ('MoU') to establish the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor ('IMEC') at the 2023 G20 Summit."[13] IMEC is thus the first major corridor initiative born not from development finance for landlocked States, but from geoeconomic competition among major powers. This origin explains both its political visibility and its institutional thinness.

2.3 Economic rationale and its critics

The rationale of corridors is that enhancing connectivity through improved infrastructure and strengthened institutions increases trade and fosters competitiveness, best achieved, where resources are limited, by concentrating investment along a few routes. The World Bank's *World Development Report 2009* justified this concentration: lower transport costs first increase spatial disparities, then lead to inclusive development as people and activity move towards economic density. Mottola notes, however, that scholars have observed that "infrastructure improvements are not necessarily conducive to development and that most corridors have fallen short of the spill-over effects that they were supposed to produce", and that corridors linked to resource extraction "have been criticized for reiterating a model of development based on extractivism".[14] For IMEC, whose promise is to integrate

8 M. Mottola, *Economic Corridors. Transnational Law and the Production of Space*, doctoral thesis in international law, University of Padua, 2025, pp. ii, 5–6.

9 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 4–6.

10 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 7–8.

11 M. Mottola, *Economic Corridors. Transnational Law and the Production of Space*, doctoral thesis in international law, University of Padua, 2025, abstract and Chapter 4.

12 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 9.

13 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 10.

14 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 11–12. Mottola refers here to C. Thame, 'The Economic Corridors Paradigm as Extractivism' (2021) 47 *Review of International Studies* 549.

the territories it crosses rather than simply to traverse them, this is a design requirement: local value addition, industrial zones and spur connections should be built into its governance from the start.

2.4 Policy objectives: a further form of regional integration

The central objective of corridors is economic development, but corridor programmes are "generally multidimensional" and driven by more than one policy objective: infrastructure (transport, but also energy, as in the Southern Gas Corridor); trade and transit facilitation, in line with the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation; the promotion of economic activities along the axis, as in India's 1,483 km Delhi–Mumbai Industrial Corridor; links with special economic zones and free zones at gateway ports; and, increasingly, sustainability and inclusivity.[15] Mottola draws a conclusion of the first importance for IMEC:

> *"Trade facilitation is, in turn, considered as a strategy to achieve economic integration among the countries that participate in the corridor initiative. As such, economic corridors constitute a further form of regional integration alternative to free trade areas and customs unions."*
>
> — Milena Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, para. 15

This insight changes how IMEC's governance should be conceived. IMEC links partners that are not, and are unlikely to become, members of a single free trade area or customs union. The corridor itself can be the instrument of integration among them, provided it is equipped with the functional dimension that free trade agreements and customs unions possess: rules, institutions and a mechanism to apply them. IMEC also combines all of Mottola's policy objectives at once (multimodal transport, energy, digital, industrial zones and free zones at its gateway ports), which makes its functional dimension correspondingly more demanding.

2.5 A taxonomy of corridors, and where IMEC sits

Mottola proposes a taxonomy based on four criteria: geographical scope; economic function and stage of evolution; proponents and financiers; and the role of law and institutions.[16] Applying it to IMEC is instructive:

Criterion (Mottola)	Categories	IMEC
Geographical scope	Overland, maritime or fluvial; domestic or cross-border; linking two or more States, or even two or more continents (as the BRI's Eurasian Land Bridge)	**Multimodal and intercontinental**: maritime (Arabian Sea, Mediterranean) and overland (Gulf–Levant rail); three regions; plus energy and data
Economic function and stage	Trade-led or investment-led; transport → logistics → trade/transit → economic, growth or development corridor	**Both trade-led and investment-led**; aspires to be an economic corridor while still at the transport and logistics stage on most segments
Proponents and financiers	Government-led, donor-led (MDBs, regional organisations, third States) or private-led (often through PPPs)	**Government-led by major powers**, with private operators and sovereign funds as de facto co-proponents; no MDB anchor
Role of law and institutions	"Legislative development model": a legal instrument defines the corridor and the regulatory initiatives needed; or "disjointed incrementalism": improvements by various actors "with little coordination and no formal corridor organization or mechanism to prioritize initiatives"	**Currently closer to disjointed incrementalism**: a non-binding MoU, bilateral frameworks and segment projects without a corridor organisation or prioritisation mechanism

15 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 13–18.

16 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 19–23.

The last line is the crux of this policy paper. Mottola's distinction, drawn from World Bank work on corridor management, between a **legislative development model** and **disjointed incrementalism** describes precisely the choice IMEC now faces.[17] The pathway proposed in Part III is a plan to move IMEC from the second model to the first, at a pace compatible with its political context.

2.6 The regulatory instruments of corridors

Mottola describes "a diverse array of legal and quasi-legal (soft law) instruments", noting that a comprehensive examination is hindered by "the widespread lack of transparency surrounding corridor schemes".[18] Four families can be distinguished.

Corridor-specific treaties

Cross-border corridors usually rest on bilateral or plurilateral treaties among neighbouring States, often members of a regional organisation. Their content is not uniform, but they recurrently cover three subject matters.[19]

- **Transit and trade facilitation.** Corridor treaties provide for the right of transit, often conditioned on the use of the routes identified as the corridor. They give regional content to multilateral rules that leave room for specification: Article V(2) GATT guarantees freedom of transit "via the routes most convenient for international transit" but does not identify the routes; Article 11 of the Trade Facilitation Agreement encourages separate infrastructure for transit traffic and cooperation among Members; Article 125 UNCLOS leaves the modalities of landlocked States' transit to bilateral, subregional or regional agreements. Corridor treaties exempt transit from duties, simplify and harmonise customs procedures and documents, provide for joint border posts and contain non-discrimination clauses. Mottola observes that, "surprisingly, none of the corridor treaties adopt the most widely used unified customs procedure", the TIR Convention.
- **Infrastructure development.** Provisions on the construction and maintenance of specific projects, harmonised technical standards, coordinated cross-border construction (the Abidjan–Lagos treaty assigns the construction, management and operation of the highway to a dedicated supranational agency), safety of transit traffic and technical annexes by mode.
- **Sustainability.** References to environmental, health and social concerns, "framed in programmatic terms, and rarely as commitments".

All corridor treaties also contain institutional provisions and final clauses on dispute settlement, the relationship with other instruments, consent, accession and amendment. Mottola characterises them as hybrids of transit treaties, regional trade agreements, road transport agreements, transboundary water agreements and cross-border infrastructure agreements, "much broader in scope" than any of these categories, with a corresponding "risk of overlapping with or contradicting existing international instruments".[20] She adds a point with direct consequences for transparency: corridor treaties do not fall within the regional trade agreements to be notified to the WTO under Article XXIV(7) GATT and "have mostly not been registered with the United Nations Secretariat", which "might explain why some corridor treaties remain confidential".[21]

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17 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 23. The distinction is drawn from J. Arnold, *Best Practices in Management of International Trade Corridors*, World Bank Transport Paper 13, 2006, pp. 36–38.

18 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 24.

19 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 25–33.

20 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 34.

21 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 35.

Soft law

Decisions on corridors "are often incorporated into non-binding instruments rather than legal acts": MoUs, joint declarations, unilateral "vision" documents (the BRI was first introduced through one), agreements between local governments, and strategies or programmes of action of regional organisations, as in CAREC and the GMS. Non-binding instruments are "comparatively more common in East and South East Asia compared to Africa as well as Central, Northern, and Western Asia, where treaties on corridors prevail".[22] At the global level, UN General Assembly resolutions 69/213 (2014) and 70/197 (2015) and the Almaty (2003) and Vienna (2014) Programmes of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries have endorsed corridors as a development approach.[23] IMEC's founding MoU belongs to this family.

National instruments

Mottola observes that national corridor schemes most often result from decisions of the executive rather than the legislature, which "raises issues of democratic legitimacy since corridors are usually large scale and the dimension of the populations impacted is considerable". National instruments may also establish authorities managing international corridors, such as Pakistan's CPEC Authority Act of 2020.[24] This finding supports the MENA2050 proposal for an IMEC Parliamentary Conference.

Public–private partnerships

PPPs play two roles in corridors: the construction and operation of infrastructure under concession, and the administration of the corridor itself through an **institutional PPP**, a joint venture between public entities and private enterprises, such as the Dar es Salaam Corridor Committee. In a broader sense, PPPs also designate multi-stakeholder partnerships for development, such as the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania.[25]

2.7 The governance of corridors: corridor management institutions

Many corridor initiatives establish a **Corridor Management Institution (CMI)**, or an institutional mechanism tasked with implementing and promoting the corridor scheme. Mottola maps these institutions at two levels:[26]

Level	Form of CMI (Mottola)	Examples	Corresponding archetype (this policy paper)
International	International organisation established by treaty	Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (Art. 6 NCTTA)	2. Treaty-based intergovernmental
International	Institutional PPP whose main public parties are two or more governments	Dar es Salaam Corridor Committee	4. Corporate / association-led (PPP)
International	Administrative apparatus of an existing international organisation	ADB as secretariat of the CAREC Program	5. Bank-hosted programmatic
International	Less institutionalised forms of cooperation, such as forums	GMS Economic Corridor Forum	3. Political-declaratory
National	Governmental agency	Eastern Economic Corridor Office of	National counterpart

22 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 39.

23 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 40.

24 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 41.

25 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 42–43. The UN General Assembly's 2015 resolution underscores the need to mobilise financial resources "including through the promotion of public-private partnerships".

26 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 44.

Level	Form of CMI (Mottola)	Examples	Corresponding archetype (this policy paper)
		Thailand	
National	Public enterprise	LAPSSET Corridor Development Authority (Kenya)	National counterpart
National	Domestic authorities or national committees designated by an international arrangement	Art. 14, Constitution of the Dar es Salaam Corridor Committee	National counterpart

> *"In either case, international corridor institutions typically comprise an intergovernmental or inter-ministerial policy organ, an executive organ, and a secretariat."*
>
> — Milena Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, para. 44

This three-organ structure is the common denominator of every functioning corridor institution examined in Part II, and the core of the architecture proposed for IMEC in Part III. The comparative matrix prepared for this policy paper, built independently from the corridors' constitutive instruments, arrives at five governance archetypes that correspond closely to Mottola's forms of CMI; the convergence between the legal and the institutional readings is itself a finding. Supranational regulation (TEN-T) is the one archetype without an equivalent in Mottola's typology, because it exists only within an integration bloc.

Mottola makes two further observations of direct relevance to IMEC. First, many corridor arrangements recognise the importance of stakeholders' participation, through institutional PPPs or consultation mechanisms, but "in the context of corridors the term 'stakeholders' means primarily private sector governmental representatives and less so civil society".[27] The MENA2050 proposal for an IMEC Civil Society Council alongside a Business Council addresses precisely this gap. Second, corridors are surrounded by other institutions: multilateral development banks, which finance, assist and "contribute to the progressive conceptual development of the corridor model"; donors such as the EU; UN bodies (UNCTAD, UN-OHRLLS, UNESCAP, UNECA); regional economic communities; and programmes such as PIDA or SSATP. The resulting density has prompted proposals for coordination between corridors, such as an African Corridor Management Alliance, and UNESCAP's suggestion that States concentrate their efforts on three major Eurasian corridors.[28] Inter-corridor governance, the third level identified in section 1.3, is therefore not a theoretical concern.

2.8 Disputes and accountability

Mottola identifies four forums for corridor-related disputes.[29] **Interstate disputes**: corridor treaties mostly provide for amicable settlement followed by ad hoc arbitration, exceptionally by the International Court of Justice (Article 12 of the TRACECA Basic Multilateral Agreement); in the absence of a corridor treaty, claims can rest on bilateral transit agreements or Article V GATT; "to date corridors have not given rise to interstate disputes". **Investor–State disputes**: corridors have generated investment arbitrations (for example *Patel Engineering v Mozambique*, 2020), in which the cross-border nature of the corridor programme raises specific questions (*Rasia FZE and Borkowski v Armenia*, 2023). **Accountability mechanisms** of multilateral development banks and development agencies, to which project-affected communities have turned over compensation, consultation and environmental and social safeguards. **Domestic courts**, notably on environmental and procurement disputes, as in Kenya over the LAPSSET corridor and the Standard Gauge Railway.

27 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 45.

28 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 46–49.

29 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 50–53.

The lesson for IMEC is that a corridor without a dispute-settlement and accountability architecture does not avoid disputes; it simply leaves them to be decided in fragmented forums, case by case, with no corridor-level coherence. A credible route to remedy is also what gives private capital the confidence to enter long-dated, immobile and politically exposed investments.[30]

2.9 Mottola's assessment and its implications for IMEC

Mottola concludes that the concept of economic corridor "is certainly not a strictly legal one", but that its regulatory and institutional dimension deserves attention, "not least for the multiplicity of legal sources and institutions involved, which make corridors a compelling example of transnational regulation and multilevel governance". Corridors "provide a spatial instantiation of how international law is adapting to the waning relevance of territory and borders as constitutive elements of State sovereignty".[31] She identifies three challenges, each of which applies to IMEC with particular force:[32]

- **Burdensome implementation.** Corridor instruments "require positive action by the participant to the initiatives"; facilitation commitments, "as much as couched in legal terms, leave a wide margin of flexibility as to their implementation", and the cost and capacity required to introduce new legislation and institutions "should not be underestimated".
- **Added complexity.** Corridor schemes "add a further layer of complexity to the already highly fragmented landscape of transit and trade regulatory initiatives", all the more so since the corridor phenomenon is itself fragmented and "lacking a single overarching institution".
- **Competing interests.** There is wide consensus on the need for corridors to accommodate competing interests, which "presupposes bottom-up approaches to corridor development, comprehensive stakeholders' engagement, and enhanced transparency of corridor initiatives, including of relevant policy and legal documents".

> *"All in all, the success of economic corridors depends on their ability to evolve into engines of sustainable inclusive development as opposed to enclaves of economic growth."*
>
> — Milena Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, para. 55

Implications of Mottola's framework for the governance of IMEC

- **Build the functional dimension.** IMEC's physical dimension is progressing; its functional dimension (laws, policies, institutions) is what is missing, and it is what makes a set of infrastructures a corridor.
- **Move from disjointed incrementalism to a legislative development model**, in sequence: from MoU to charter to framework agreement.
- **Adopt the standard three-organ structure** (policy organ, executive organ, secretariat), complemented by national counterparts in each participating State.
- **Use the corridor as an instrument of integration** among partners that share no free trade area or customs union, anchored in WTO transit and facilitation rules and, where possible, in the TIR system.
- **Make transparency a rule**: publish IMEC instruments and register any treaty with the UN Secretariat.
- **Associate civil society and parliaments**, not only business, to address the legitimacy deficit of executive-made corridors.
- **Provide for disputes and accountability** at interstate, investor–State and community levels.

30 MENA2050 IMEC Task Force, *Economic Corridors: Best and Lasting Outcomes. A Reference Note on Durable Deliverables, Ranked by Institutional Resilience*, July 2026 (prepared for this policy paper), section 2.4.

31 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 54.

32 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 55.

- **Aim for an engine of inclusive development, not an enclave of growth**: local value addition, social and environmental commitments in operative provisions.

3. The governance of economic corridors compared

3.1 Historical antecedents: rivers, canals and the freedom of transit

Corridor governance is older than the term. The **Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine**, created by the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and consolidated by the Mannheim Convention of 1868, is the oldest international organisation still in operation. It combines a treaty-guaranteed freedom of navigation, a permanent seat (Strasbourg), regulatory power over technical standards and a specialised judicial chain for navigation disputes. The **Danube Commission** (Belgrade Convention, 1948) offers a second model, and the **Constantinople Convention of 1888** guaranteed free passage through the Suez Canal, now operated by a dedicated national authority. The 1921 Barcelona Convention and Statute on Freedom of Transit generalised the principle that States of transit must facilitate passage without discrimination.

Three features of these regimes still matter. They separated the **guarantee of passage** (treaty law) from the **operation of the route** (an authority or commission). They gave a permanent organ **regulatory competence over technical rules** rather than leaving every change to diplomatic negotiation. And they survived wars and regime changes because the institution held the memory and the rules, not the governments of the day. The modern instruments examined below are in many respects reinventions of this nineteenth-century technique.

3.2 Genesis and constitutive instrument

The founding instrument largely determines everything that follows. At one end of the spectrum stands **TEN-T**, governed since July 2024 by Regulation (EU) 2024/1679: binding EU law, enforceable before the Court of Justice, with deadlines in 2030, 2040 and 2050 and nine European Transport Corridors. At the other end stand **BRI/CPEC** and **IMEC**: no constitutive treaty, a web of MoUs, and a format that is reversible at will, as Italy showed when it let its BRI memorandum lapse in December 2023.

In between lies the large family of **treaty-based corridors**: the INSTC Agreement (St Petersburg, 2000, in force 2002), which mandates the harmonisation of transport policy and law and the "security of travel and safety of goods"; the TRACECA Basic Multilateral Agreement (Baku, 1998), which began as an EU technical-assistance programme and hardened into treaty law; the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Agreement (1985, revised 1996 and 2007); the Central Corridor CCTTFA (2006); and the Greater Mekong CBTA, ratified by all six GMS countries, with 17 annexes and three protocols. **Lobito** is a revealing hybrid: a binding regional agreement (the LCTTFA, 2023) creating an agency whose secretariat became operational in 2025, overlaid by a non-binding seven-party MoU of October 2023 mobilising Western financiers.

The **Middle Corridor** illustrates a fourth route: governance led from below by operators. The TITR International Association, formed in Astana in 2014 by rail, port and shipping companies, has legal personality under Kazakh law; the State layer above it remains declaratory. In southern Africa, the **Walvis Bay Corridor Group**, a public–private vehicle created in 2000, is the reference model of a commercially run corridor without a treaty.

3.3 Governance architecture

Four organs recur in mature corridors: a political organ (summit or council of ministers), an executive organ of senior officials, a permanent secretariat and a business channel. Their presence and their powers vary considerably:

Corridor	Political / executive organs	Secretariat	Business channel	Decision rule
TEN-T	Council and Parliament; Commission (DG MOVE); a European Coordinator per corridor; Corridor Fora	Commission services; TENtec system	Corridor Fora include infrastructure managers, terminals, rail undertakings	Qualified majority; enforceable
Northern Corridor	Council of Ministers; Executive Committee of permanent secretaries; specialised committees	NCTTCA Permanent Secretariat, Mombasa	Shippers' councils, transporters' associations, port users	Council decides; Secretariat executes
TRACECA	Intergovernmental Commission (annual); national secretaries; working groups	Permanent Secretariat, Baku	Consulted, no formal chamber	Consensus
INSTC	Coordination Council; expert groups	Hosted by Iran; thin and irregular	Freight-forwarder federations	Consensus; infrequent meetings
GMS	Triennial summit; annual ministerial; sector forums; national facilitation committees	Hosted by the ADB	GMS Business Council	Consensus; investment framework prioritises
CAREC	Annual ministerial; senior officials; customs committee	ADB as secretariat; CAREC Institute (Urumqi)	Federation of carrier and forwarder associations	Consensus; ADB drafts and finances
Middle Corridor (TITR)	Ad hoc ministerials; quadrilateral formats; Association Board	TITR Association, Astana	The Association is the business channel	General Assembly adopts work plan
Lobito	LCTTFA ministerial council; PGII and Global Gateway summits	LCTTFA Secretariat (operational 2025)	Concessionaires; Africa Finance Corporation as lead developer	Consensus; World Bank coordinates financiers
BRI / CPEC	Belt and Road Forum; CPEC Joint Cooperation Committee	None internationally; CPEC Authority (Pakistan)	Chinese state-owned enterprises, de facto	Bilateral, asymmetric
IMEC	Ministerial level foreseen (not yet convened); Steering Committee of Sherpas/Special Envoys; five technical working groups	**None** (an Analytics and Coordination WG supports the Steering Committee)	Informal: port operators, cable and energy consortia	**No published decision rule**; extension decided by the eight signatories

The comparison establishes the single most robust finding of this policy paper: **the permanent secretariat is the load-bearing element of corridor governance.** Every corridor that has delivered sustained harmonisation has one, even a modest one. The Northern Corridor secretariat in Mombasa, with a small staff and assessed contributions, has kept a forty-year file alive across changes of government in five States. The INSTC, despite a binding treaty, has delivered little in a quarter-century, in part because its secretariat is thin and meetings are irregular. Durability, in short, is a function of institutionalisation, not of ambition: a declaration unaccompanied by a standing body typically loses political traction within eighteen months, whereas a modest secretariat with a dedicated budget line absorbs turnover in national administrations and preserves technical memory.[33]

33 MENA2050 IMEC Task Force, *Economic Corridors: Best and Lasting Outcomes. A Reference Note on Durable Deliverables, Ranked by Institutional Resilience*, July 2026 (prepared for this policy paper), sections 1 and 2.1.

3.4 Financing

Only the European Union possesses a genuine common corridor fund: the Connecting Europe Facility, a line in the EU budget, combined with EIB lending, InvestEU and cohesion funds, and since 2021 an envelope for military mobility. Everywhere else, financing is either **portfolio-based** (BRI policy-bank lending, sovereign-guaranteed loans, EPC-plus-finance, resource-backed lending), **pipeline-based** (the GMS Regional Investment Framework, a costed and prioritised list that acts as a quasi-fund without a treasury; CAREC, where the ADB pipeline is the fund), **member-funded** (assessed contributions to the Northern and Central Corridor secretariats; membership fees and service revenue at Walvis Bay) or **stacked** (Lobito).

Lobito is the world's live experiment in governing blended finance. It combines a US DFC loan to the Lobito Atlantic Railway concession, the Africa Finance Corporation as lead developer, African Development Bank commitments, Team Europe and Global Gateway funds, the EIB, the World Bank, USTDA project preparation and private equity, all deliberately assembled as an alternative to state lending. Whether stacked finance can be governed as coherently as a single sovereign lender remains the open question; the World Bank–led regional coordination meeting of February 2026 exists precisely because it was not being governed coherently. For IMEC, which has no fund and maps neatly onto neither PGII nor Global Gateway, the lesson is that a fund matters less than the **agreed risk-allocation principles** and the **project preparation capacity** that give a pipeline a counterparty: the binding constraint on corridor investment is more often preparation than capital.[34]

3.5 Harmonisation of flows, customs, procedures and standards

Soft infrastructure is cheaper than steel and concrete and has historically been the binding constraint on corridor performance; the TIR Convention transformed transit economics across a continent at a fraction of the cost of any road-building programme. The comparison shows that harmonisation follows a **fixed sequence**, and that skipping a step causes regression:

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
Transit guarantee	**One-stop border posts**	**Harmonised technical standards**	**Electronic single window**	**Mutual recognition of e-documents**	**AEO mutual recognition**

The harmonisation sequence observed across corridors (source: comparative matrix prepared for this policy paper).

The **Northern Corridor** operates at an advanced stage: RCTG-Carnet transit guarantee, the EAC Single Customs Territory, one-stop border posts, an interoperable regional electronic cargo-tracking system and, above all, a **Transport Observatory** that publishes transit and dwell times, weighbridge stops and non-tariff barrier counts. The **GMS CBTA**, with its annexes on single-stop inspection, transit, vehicle admission, dangerous goods and multimodal carriers, is the most complete corridor facilitation treaty in the developing world and the best drafting precedent available. **CAREC**'s Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring methodology is the benchmark others have borrowed. By contrast, the **Middle Corridor** jumped to digitalisation in its 2026 work plan while still lacking a unified transit regime across the Caspian, which is precisely why the Caspian crossing remains its bottleneck. The **Abidjan–Lagos** corridor shows that the operative metric can be the number of illegal roadblocks per hundred kilometres: a corridor whose bottleneck is rent-extraction, not infrastructure.

IMEC has no corridor-level harmonisation instrument: no unified tariff, no customs annex, no binding implementation mechanism. The OECD's Trade Facilitation Indicators show that its participants have advanced national systems, but that "border agency co-operation is the most significant corridor-

34 MENA2050 IMEC Task Force, *Economic Corridors: Best and Lasting Outcomes. A Reference Note on Durable Deliverables, Ranked by Institutional Resilience*, July 2026 (prepared for this policy paper), sections 2.2 and 2.6.

wide bottleneck"; it recommends shared risk management, sharing of control results, alignment of data requirements, mutual recognition of trusted traders and, in the longer term, linked Single Windows and common data models.[35] Rail gauge, signalling and port-interface standards are unaddressed, and everything is bilateral, the India–UAE Intergovernmental Framework Agreement of February 2024 covering only two parties. The MENA2050 Declaration rightly identifies interoperable customs and trusted digital trade systems as the fastest and least politically exposed pathway to progress; the comparative evidence adds that such a pathway still needs a transit guarantee and a work programme with deadlines, since technical, low-visibility measures are consistently deferred in favour of announceable physical projects.

3.6 Safety, security and defence

Security is the dimension in which corridor governance is least developed and most consequential. **The EU is the only actor that has legally fused its economic corridor and its defence corridor**: Regulation 2024/1679 recognises military mobility; four priority military-mobility corridors were agreed in 2025 with some 500 dual-use "hotspot" projects; the Military Mobility Package of November 2025 proposes binding rules on cross-border movement permissions and foreign-ownership screening; and the CER and NIS2 Directives, the EU Action Plan on Cable Security (2025) and naval operations Atalanta and Aspides cover critical entities, cyber and the sea legs of European trade.

Everyone else improvises. Pakistan raised a Special Security Division of some 15,000 troops to protect CPEC personnel; the Gulf of Guinea relies on the Yaoundé Architecture; the Malacca Strait has coordinated patrols and the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre in Singapore; the Western Indian Ocean has the Djibouti Code of Conduct and its Jeddah Amendment; and the 2018 Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea prohibits non-littoral armed forces, constraining any external security role on the Middle Corridor. The INSTC exists partly as a sanctions-and-chokepoint hedge. **A corridor without a security clause is a corridor whose security will be decided by whoever is willing to deploy.**

For IMEC, the exposure has been demonstrated rather than hypothesised. The 2023 MoU contains no security architecture, and its eastern maritime leg was conceived around Gulf ports inside the Strait of Hormuz while Oman, whose ports at Duqm and Salalah lie outside it, was not a signatory. The crisis that began in February 2026 tested that design directly; the United Arab Emirates' increased use of Fujairah and Khor Fakkan, east of the Strait, illustrates the value of redundancy that no corridor-level body had been mandated to plan.[36] **IMEC's routing exposure is a governance failure, not a geographic one**: it was possible only because no body had a mandate to run a corridor-level risk assessment.

3.7 Digital corridors and the governance of data

The physical layer of digital corridors (fibre, subsea cables, landing stations, data centres) is being built far faster than the legal layer that governs what may travel through it. A data packet moving along IMEC from Mumbai to Marseille crosses four incompatible regime families: the rights-based adequacy model of the EU's GDPR; the trade-based, open-with-exceptions model of CPTPP and DEPA; the sovereignty-based conditional-export model; and the sovereignty-based negative-list model of India's Digital Personal Data Protection Act of 2023, with sectoral localisation rules. No corridor-level instrument reconciles them.

The comparison identifies **five instruments that a digital corridor needs**, none of which any corridor currently possesses in full: (1) a **transfer basis** (mutual adequacy, model clauses or a modular accession instrument, DEPA's modularity being the most exportable design); (2) a **government-**

35 OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/0117c321-en, Executive summary and Chapter 4, pp. 12–13 and 86–87.

36 É. Guiochon, 'The Middle East's New Economic Corridors and the Strait of Hormuz Crisis', *Manara Magazine*, 15 September 2026, https://manaramagazine.org/2026/09/middle-easts-economic-corridors-hormuz/.

access discipline, since the real obstacle to mutual recognition is never corporate conduct but the powers of intelligence services, which is why the OECD Declaration on Government Access to Personal Data Held by Private Sector Entities (December 2022) matters so much; (3) a **security exception that is not self-judging**, the RCEP precedent showing how a self-judging exception hollows out a chapter; (4) **interoperable electronic transport documents** on UN/CEFACT standards and the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records, a field in which the Middle Corridor, working with UNECE and TRACECA, is quietly ahead of IMEC; and (5) a **physical-layer security regime**: route diversity, landing-station ownership screening, repair-vessel capacity and an attribution mechanism. Logistics data reveals volumes, origins, customers, dependencies and vulnerabilities: whoever holds a corridor's data holds a map of everyone's supply chain. The corridor instruments of the next decade will have data chapters, and these will be the hardest to negotiate.

3.8 Accession, enlargement and integration

Enlargement is where the choice of instrument shows its consequences most clearly. The **Northern Corridor** clause (application, approval by the Council of Ministers, deposit of an instrument of accession with the Secretariat) is three lines long, has worked for forty years and has admitted South Sudan and the DRC after the founding. The **INSTC** has received ten accessions since 2000. **CAREC** admitted Georgia in 2016 by a simple ministerial decision, the lowest-cost accession of any credible corridor, though membership confers no rights. **TEN-T** extends by amending the annexes of its Regulation, which is how Ukraine and Moldova were integrated into the European Transport Corridors. **Lobito** brought in Tanzania for its Atlantic-to-Indian-Ocean extension by MoU. The **Central Corridor**'s Memorandum of Cooperation with the Northern Corridor, signed in Mombasa in January 2026, opens a third pathway: **institutional interoperability without membership**.

IMEC has no accession clause. Greece, Israel, Jordan, Oman, Egypt and Cyprus are corridor-relevant but not signatories, a gap now widely regarded as a design error, above all as regards Oman. Accession clauses are the cheapest thing to draft and the most expensive thing to omit.

4. Twelve lessons from the comparison

1. **Legal density and speed of creation trade off, and the trade-off can only be sequenced, not avoided.** TEN-T took decades and produces enforceable results; IMEC was launched in a weekend and has produced, in three years, no secretariat, no financing mechanism and no customs annex. An MoU is a mandate to negotiate an instrument, not a substitute for one.
2. **The permanent secretariat is the strongest single predictor of survival.** It need not be large, but it must be permanent, have an assured budget line, a host-country agreement and a mandate to convene, track commitments and report publicly, including on non-compliance.
3. **Decision rules prevent paralysis.** Consensus for constitutive matters; qualified majority or "consensus minus one", with the right for a dissenting party not to be bound, for work programmes and technical annexes. This is the device that allows variable-geometry progress.
4. **Separate the map from the treaty.** Following the TEN-T technique, the route and components should sit in an annex amendable by the political organ, so that an extension (to Oman, Greece or Egypt, for instance) does not require fresh ratification.
5. **Businesses are governance actors, not merely stakeholders.** The TITR Association is the Middle Corridor's only functioning institution; the Walvis Bay Corridor Group is its corridor; a thirty-year concession determines more about Lobito's operation than any ministerial council. A Business Council with formal consultation rights is preferable to unregulated informal influence.
6. **Finance follows preparation.** A short, prepared, prioritised pipeline, with published selection criteria and a project preparation facility, converts diplomatic intent into procurement. Wish-lists of two hundred unprepared projects do not.

7. **Measure to reform.** Published observatories (CAREC CPMM, the Northern Corridor Transport Observatory) convert diffuse problems into attributable ones and sustain political pressure for reform.
8. **Security must be designed in, not retrofitted.** The choice of governance instruments determines whether they reach the sovereign domains of critical-infrastructure protection, cybersecurity and defence; a corridor-wide security and resilience framework, conversely, needs an institutional owner.
9. **The trust layer for data must be built at the level of State access**, not corporate conduct, and security exceptions must not be self-judging.
10. **Plan for enlargement and inter-corridor relations from day one**: an accession clause, an observer category, an associate category for operators and third-country partners, a withdrawal clause, and agreements of cooperation with neighbouring corridors.
11. **Transparency and legitimacy are conditions of durability.** Mottola shows that corridor treaties are rarely notified to the WTO or registered with the UN Secretariat, that some remain confidential, that national corridor schemes usually emanate from the executive rather than the legislature, raising "issues of democratic legitimacy", and that "stakeholders" in corridors usually means business "and less so civil society". Publication of instruments, parliamentary association and civil-society consultation are therefore not ornaments but safeguards.[37]
12. **Disputes will arise whether or not they are provided for.** Corridors have generated investor–State arbitrations, complaints to development-bank accountability mechanisms and domestic litigation, even though no interstate corridor dispute has yet been brought. A corridor without a dispute and accountability architecture leaves these disputes to fragmented forums.[38]

A caution on extraction and on resilience

Corridors that lack an explicit resilience and environmental clause risk becoming stranded assets over asset lifetimes of thirty to fifty years; and corridors that move raw commodities outward without deepening local exchange stall politically. Both cautions should be embedded in the operative text of a founding instrument, not relegated to an annex: annexed commitments tend to be treated as aspirational, operative paragraphs do not.

PART III · THE IMEC

5. The IMEC: promise, design and deficits

5.1 The founding Memorandum of Understanding

IMEC was launched on 9 September 2023, on the margins of the G20 Summit in New Delhi, through a Memorandum of Understanding on its principles signed by India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, the European Union, France, Germany and Italy.[39] The MoU envisages two corridors: an **eastern corridor** connecting India to the Gulf, and a **northern corridor** connecting the Gulf to Europe, combining a ship-to-rail transit network with existing maritime and road routes. Along the route, the participants intend "to enable the laying of cable for electricity and digital connectivity, as

37 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 35, 41, 45 and 55.

38 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 50–53.

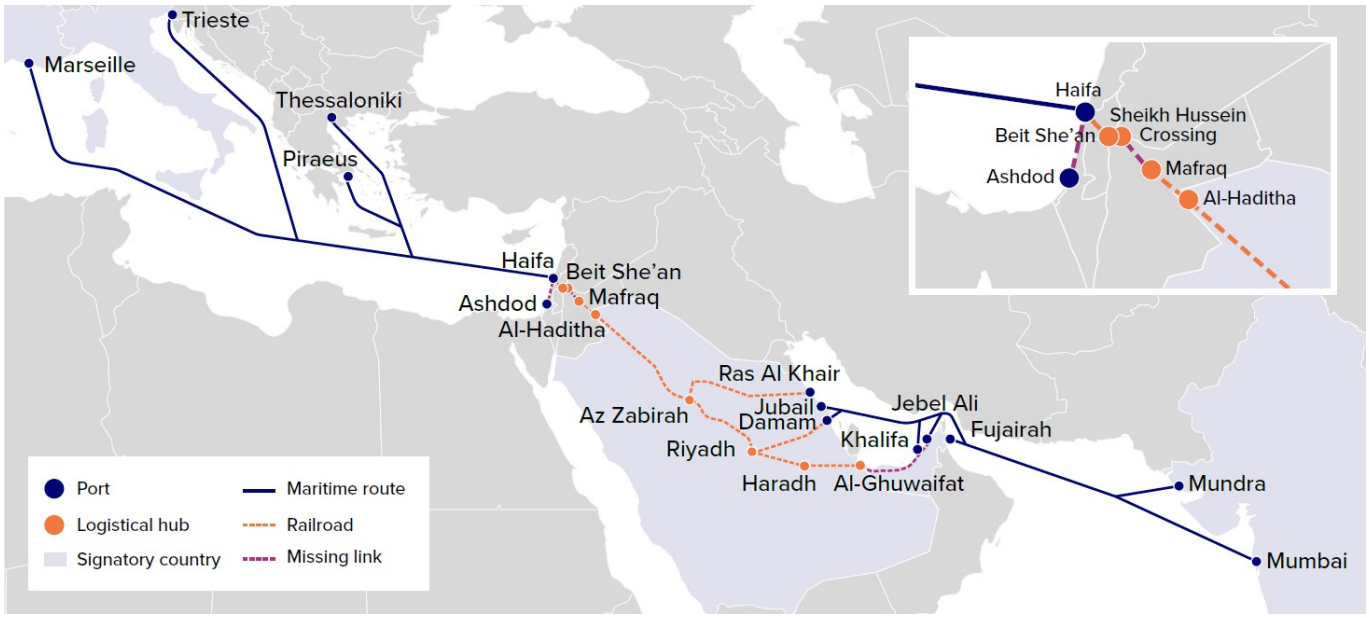
39 *Memorandum of Understanding on the Principles of an India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor*, New Delhi, 9 September 2023.

well as pipe for clean hydrogen export". The participants committed to meet within sixty days to develop and commit to an action plan with timetables.

In legal terms, the MoU is a typical archetype-3 instrument. It "sets forth political commitments of the Participants and does not create rights or obligations under international law". Significantly, it already contains the seed of its own institutionalisation: the participants committed to "establish coordinating entities" to address the full range of technical, design, financing, legal and regulatory questions. Three years on, that commitment has been only partly honoured through working groups and Special Envoys. The MoU establishes no secretariat, no financing mechanism, no customs or technical annex, no dispute settlement and no accession procedure. Operationalisation has therefore proceeded bilaterally and by segment, most notably through the India–UAE Intergovernmental Framework Agreement of 13 February 2024, and through corporate investments by port operators, shipping lines, and cable and energy consortia.

MAP

The India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)



Eastern leg: maritime routes from Mundra and Mumbai to the UAE ports of Fujairah, Jebel Ali and Khalifa. Northern leg: rail across the UAE and Saudi Arabia (Al-Ghuwaifat, Haradh, Riyadh, Az Zabirah, Ras Al Khair, Dammam, Jubail) to Jordan (Al-Haditha, Mafraq), the Sheikh Hussein crossing, Beit She'an and the port of Haifa, with missing links shown in purple. Western leg: maritime routes from Haifa to Piraeus, Thessaloniki, Trieste and Marseille. Shaded: signatory countries of the 2023 MoU.

5.2 IMEC since 2023: a corridor tested by conflict

Within a month of its signature, the corridor's northern leg was overtaken by events: the attack of 7 October 2023 on Israel and the war in Gaza froze the political conditions on which the Gulf–Levant land route depends. Since then, as the OECD observes in its first assessment of the corridor, published in November 2026, "IMEC has progressively evolved towards an institutionalised governance framework" and is "moving from a high-level political commitment to an increasingly structured implementation process coordinated by a governing body and working groups".[40]

Milestones, 2024–2026

Date	Development	Governance significance
13 Feb 2024	India–UAE Intergovernmental Framework Agreement on the corridor	First operational instrument, bilateral; covers two of eight participants
2025	Signatories establish the **IMEC Steering Committee** and working groups, and nominate Special Envoys, Sherpas or focal points	First corridor-level coordinating body, honouring in part the MoU's commitment to "establish coordinating entities"
Aug 2025 – Jun 2026	Four Steering Committee meetings: New Delhi (Aug 2025), Brussels (Oct 2025), Trieste (Mar 2026), Marseille (Jun 2026)	Regular rhythm at senior-official level; ministerial level not yet convened
Nov 2025	Visit of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to the White House, seen as a possible relaunch of IMEC	Political impetus from the US–Saudi relationship
Jan 2026	EU–Jordan Summit (8 Jan) underlines Jordan's role in IMEC; EU–India Summit in New Delhi (27 Jan) announces the conclusion of the FTA negotiations and adopts a Joint Comprehensive Strategic Agenda calling for deepened collaboration under IMEC; signature expected in December 2026 and entry into force in early 2027, following approval by the Council of the EU and the European Parliament, alongside India's ratification process	Strengthens the trade and policy rationale linking the corridor's two ends
From Feb 2026	Crisis in and around the Strait of Hormuz: severe disruption of shipping; trucks diverted across the Arabian Peninsula; surge of traffic at Omani ports (Salalah, Duqm, Sohar), Fujairah, Khor Fakkan and Eastern Mediterranean ports	Stress test of the eastern leg; demonstrates the need for corridor-level risk assessment and redundancy
Apr 2026	"New G7 Approach to Economic Corridors" (French G7 Presidency) names IMEC as a key corridor; Jordan–UAE agreement on a 360 km railway to Aqaba	IMEC anchored in G7 corridor principles; emergence of a "network of corridors"
Jun 2026	Steering Committee in Marseille elaborates a list of criteria for labelling projects as "IMEC projects"	First corridor-level instrument for project selection and coherence
Sept 2026	Oman ratifies the Hafeet Rail agreement (Abu Dhabi–Sohar, 238 km); independent assessments call for a rethink at the MoU's third anniversary	Bypass of Hormuz takes shape outside the signatory circle
Oct 2026	Private-sector-led **IMEC Ports Club** launched in New Delhi; French Special Envoy cites Egypt, Lebanon, Oman, Greece and Cyprus as interested and hopes for a ministerial meeting by end-2026	Embryo of a business channel; enlargement debated without an accession clause
Nov 2026	OECD publishes *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, a draft of which was shared with the Steering Committee in advance	First evidence base and monitoring framework for the corridor

40 OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/0117c321-en, Chapter 1, pp. 15–16. This report, a draft of which was shared in advance with the IMEC Steering Committee, and which is prefaced by the OECD Secretary-General and the Special Envoy of the French President for IMEC, is the first public and authoritative account of IMEC's governance and connectivity.

Speaking in New Delhi in October 2026, France's Special Envoy, Gérard Mestrallet, described IMEC as a "network of complementary routes" whose value lies in resilience: if one route faces "a blockage or an accident", the others remain available. He indicated that "potential extension will only be decided by the eight governments", that non-members could be associated in different forms (full member, associated member or another arrangement), and that "members or not members, we will have to work with them."

The governance architecture as it stands

IMEC governance has developed on **three levels**:

- **Ministerial meetings**, foreseen but, according to public statements, not yet convened as of October 2026;
- **the Steering Committee**, bringing together the Special Envoys, Sherpas or focal points of the signatories. Their institutional anchoring is revealing of the diversity of approaches: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for France and Italy, the National Security Council for India and the United States, the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy for Germany, the Ministry of Energy for Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Investment for the United Arab Emirates, and two Directorates-General (INTPA and MENA) for the European Commission;[41]
- **five technical Working Groups**, each co-chaired by two signatories, "though not all are fully functioning", according to the OECD.

Working Group	Mandate	Corresponding function in a future IMEC architecture
Strategy, coordination and studies (analytics and coordination)	Support for the preparation of feasibility studies and for the organisation of Steering Committee meetings	Nucleus of a permanent secretariat; observatory and risk register; project preparation
Transport (goods)	Strengthening infrastructure for the transport of goods by sea, rail and road	Trade and transit facilitation and technical standards committees; Annexes II and III
Energy connectivity	Clean-energy infrastructure (e.g. green hydrogen) and trans-regional energy flows	Energy committee; critical-infrastructure protection
Digital connectivity	Infrastructure for advanced connectivity, trans-regional digital connections and interoperability	Digital and data committee; Annex IV; cable security
Financing	Project financing mechanisms drawing on funds from States, international financial institutions, private actors and other bodies	IMEC Fund and project preparation facility; Investment Framework

To this core have been added two promising instruments: criteria for labelling projects as "IMEC projects" (June 2026), "to foster co-ordinated and sound infrastructure deployment", and the private-sector-led **IMEC Ports Club** (October 2026), intended to strengthen co-operation between key

41 OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, p. 15.

maritime hubs and align port development strategies.[42] Comparative experience suggests that the first can become the core of a prioritised pipeline, once the criteria are published, and the second the nucleus of a Business Council.

This structure is a real step beyond the MoU. It corresponds to what Mottola describes as the standard architecture of corridor institutions (a policy organ, an executive organ and a secretariat), but in **incomplete form**: the policy organ has not yet met at ministerial level, the Steering Committee has no published mandate or rules of procedure, there is no secretariat, and not all working groups function. The groups created, decisions taken and documents approved all remain informal and preliminary, and not all signatories are yet equally engaged. There is no dedicated working group on security and resilience: these issues are discussed transversally, as cross-cutting topics within the trade, energy and digital working groups. This is a useful starting point, but it does not amount to a corridor-wide security strategy with its own political management, which the Hormuz crisis has shown to be the most urgent need of the corridor.[43]

The process also remains **largely opaque**. Apart from the OECD report, there is, to the author's knowledge, no public information on the mandates, meetings or outputs of the Steering Committee and Working Groups, nor any published contact point for operators, investors, civil society or neighbouring States; several studies commissioned by participants are not public.[44] This is precisely the weakness that Mottola identifies across corridor schemes, whose examination is "hindered due to the widespread lack of transparency", and her conclusion that corridors require "comprehensive stakeholders' engagement, and enhanced transparency of corridor initiatives, including of relevant policy and legal documents" applies fully to IMEC.[45] The publication of the OECD report shows that transparency is possible and useful; it should become the rule.

From a line to a network of corridors, and a widening circle

Geopolitical shocks have transformed IMEC's geography. The OECD describes an evolution "from its original linear configuration towards a flexible network of corridors", which it calls "a pragmatic response to changing regional conditions", with new projects such as the Jordan–UAE railway to Aqaba, the Abu Dhabi–Sohar Hafeet Rail line and discussions on reviving the Hejaz Railway.[46] At the same time, the circle of participants is widening well beyond the signatories:

- **Israel and Jordan**, mentioned in the MoU but not signatories, have requested formal membership; Jordan has created an Inter-Agency IMEC Task Force and is positioning Aqaba as a hub.
- **Greece** has nominated a Special Envoy; **Cyprus** has designated a representative and launched a "Friends of IMEC" group with Greece, Croatia, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovenia; Malta has shown interest.
- **Egypt** has requested to take part, with the support of France, Italy and the European Commission; **Lebanon** held a first technical meeting in June 2026; **Oman** "is de facto becoming a key component of the corridor network"; **Syria** could emerge as a transit country, contingent on its stability.
- Links with adjacent corridors (the Three Seas Initiative, the Middle Corridor, TEN-T corridors, and East African corridors such as the Northern Corridor and LAPSSET) are increasingly requested.

This evolution vindicates three recommendations of this policy paper: a route annex amendable by the political organ rather than a fixed map; an accession and association mechanism with explicit

42 OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, p. 16.

43 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 44.

44 The OECD itself notes that some comprehensive studies are not public, for example the study by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and Egis (2025) and the assessment of the German Energy Agency (Dena, 2025): OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, p. 19.

45 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 24 and 55.

46 OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, pp. 16–18.

categories; and inter-corridor governance. The OECD itself recommends that expansion be assessed "against common, evidence-based criteria on countries' hard and soft connectivity preparedness, their multimodality and their potential for integration with other IMEC countries".[47] Without a governance mechanism to apply such criteria, enlargement will be decided case by case, and the "network of corridors" risks becoming a collection of parallel bilateral routes.

5.3 The OECD's first assessment of IMEC connectivity

The OECD report applies the OECD Corridors' Connectivity Scoreboard (hard connectivity, soft connectivity, performance and outcomes) to the corridor, with dedicated chapters on transport infrastructure and trade facilitation and new indicators for energy and digital connectivity. Its central message is a governance message: the development of IMEC "will depend not only on enhancing physical connectivity by addressing missing rail links and enhancing port capacities, but also on building effective governance and trade facilitation frameworks that enable sustained collaboration among participating countries".[48] Its main findings and their implications for governance are summarised below.

OECD finding (2026)	Governance implication for IMEC
Rail is the weakest component. No direct rail links exist between Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE; Jordan's 1 050 mm gauge is incompatible with the standard gauge of Israel and Saudi Arabia; rail plans "reflect varying national priorities and starting points, rather than a coordinated corridor vision".	A corridor-level planning function is needed to turn national plans into a coordinated corridor vision: a costed IMEC Investment Framework, a technical-standards annex with transition periods, and dedicated support to the critical transit State, Jordan.
Maritime transport is a strength but exposed to chokepoints. Dependence on the Straits of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandab is a major risk; Fujairah lacks capacity to absorb all trade in a disruption; "the participation of Oman would be particularly relevant"; Eastern Mediterranean and western Indian ports face future capacity limits.	Corridor-level risk assessment and route redundancy (Chapter 6); observer and then member status for Oman; port-capacity planning, for which the IMEC Ports Club can be the operator channel.
Border agency co-operation is "the most significant corridor-wide bottleneck". National trade facilitation frameworks are advanced, but data requirements, IT systems and border practices differ; the OECD suggests "an IMEC consultation platform on trade facilitation".	A standing Trade Facilitation Committee, the first technical annex to negotiate (transit, shared risk management, sharing of control results, mutual recognition of trusted traders, linked Single Windows), following the fixed sequence of section 3.5.
Border inefficiencies matter more than infrastructure quality; improving border operations "could generate significant gains without requiring major investments".	Confirms that soft infrastructure is the highest-return, least politically exposed priority, consistent with the MENA2050 Declaration.
Data are inconsistent and incomplete; monitoring IMEC requires "co-ordination among national statistical authorities, international organisations, stakeholders and private sector actors".	An IMEC Observatory with mandatory data submission, using the OECD Scoreboard as baseline methodology, with the OECD and ITF as potential knowledge partners.
Energy and digital connectivity face poor regional planning, missing interconnections, unharmonised market rules and cable concentration in chokepoints such as the Red Sea; new indicators are proposed but not yet applied.	Energy and digital committees with clear mandates; cable-route diversity and resilience in the security framework; application of the OECD indicators as a work item.
Expansion should be assessed against common, evidence-based criteria.	An accession clause and observer and associate categories, with published, evidence-based criteria.

47 OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, Executive summary, pp. 11–12.

48 OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, Executive summary, p. 10.

The OECD concludes that IMEC's "long-term effectiveness and competitiveness will depend on enhanced co-operation and policy harmonisation balancing investments in physical infrastructure and improvements in soft connectivity", and states that it "stands ready to continue supporting the IMEC countries, its Steering Committee and working groups".[49] This is the language of what Mottola calls the functional dimension of corridors. The OECD has supplied the evidence base; what is still missing is the institution capable of acting on it.

5.4 The IMEC equation

For IMEC, the governance equation is particularly complex. It is driven by the exceptional magnitude, ambition and complexity of the project; by the presence at its two ends of major continental powers, India and the European Union, with deeply different legal and political systems; by a fragmented Middle East in between; by the assertive role of the United States as a co-founder; and by a highly heterogeneous group of signatory, transit, candidate and neighbouring States.[50] Three features distinguish it from every corridor examined in Part II:

- **It is inter-regional, not regional.** Every treaty-based corridor examined is anchored in a regional economic community (EAC, SADC, ECOWAS, ASEAN) or a sub-regional programme. IMEC links three regions with no common integration framework, so it cannot borrow a regional acquis as TEN-T, the Northern Corridor or Abidjan–Lagos do.
- **It is multi-sectoral by design.** Transport, energy (electricity and hydrogen), and data are bundled in the founding text, whereas most corridors began with transport and added other sectors later. This multiplies regulators, operators and security exposures.
- **It is politically conditional at its core.** The northern land leg depends on relations among Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Israel, and the eastern maritime leg on the Gulf's exposure to the Strait of Hormuz. Governance must therefore operate segment by segment while preserving the coherence of the whole.

5.5 A governance diagnosis

Measured against the seven dimensions of the comparison, IMEC's current governance presents the following profile:

Dimension	IMEC today	Best available precedent	Gap
A. Constitutive instrument	Non-binding MoU (2023); bilateral framework agreements	Northern Corridor treaty; TEN-T map annex technique	**High**
B. Architecture	Steering Committee (since 2025, four meetings); five working groups co-chaired by two signatories, not all functioning; labelling criteria; Ports Club; all informal and preliminary; ministerial level not yet convened; no secretariat, no published rules, little transparency	Council + Executive Committee + Permanent Secretariat + Business Council	**Critical**
C. Financing	No fund; a financing working group; sovereign funds and corporate balance sheets; criteria for labelling "IMEC projects"	Lobito blended-finance stack; GMS investment framework	**High**

49 OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, pp. 36 and 87.

50 MENA2050, *Institutionalise to Implement: Which governance and security arrangements are best fit to advance the IMEC?*, Concept note, November 2026, section 1.3.

Dimension	IMEC today	Best available precedent	Gap
D. Harmonisation	Advanced national systems, but no customs annex, no transit regime, no common standards; border-agency co-operation the main bottleneck (OECD 2026)	GMS CBTA; Northern Corridor observatory	**High**
E. Security	No security architecture; security treated transversally within the trade, energy and digital working groups; untested routing assumptions	EU military mobility and cable-security frameworks	**Critical**
F. Digital and data	Data cable envisaged; no transfer, access or exception rules	DEPA modularity; OECD Declaration (2022)	**High**
G. Accession	No accession clause; membership requests from Israel, Jordan and Egypt; "Friends of IMEC" group; Oman de facto part of the network	NCTTA accession article; observer category	**High**

The diagnosis confirms the concept note's premise: the institutional and the strategic deficits are one problem seen from two angles. Governance without a security dimension remains fragile; security without a governing framework remains fragmented.

5.6 The MENA2050 proposals: from soft coordination to institutional architecture

Recognising that realising IMEC ultimately requires intergovernmental leadership, political stewardship, formal governance structures and sustainable financing, the MENA2050 IMEC Declaration and the November 2026 concept note put forward two institutional options as working hypotheses:[51]

	Option A · IMEC Organization	Option B · IMEC Alliance
Political anchoring	Intergovernmental IMEC Organization	Intergovernmental IMEC Alliance with an annually rotating presidency, in a fixed order among member countries
Secretariat	Permanent Secretariat	No permanent secretariat; agenda coordination led by the chairing country
Staff and budget	Dedicated professional staff and a sustainable budget	Project-specific professional staffs
Existing mechanisms	Integration of IMEC Special Envoys and Working Groups into a coherent institutional framework	Integration of Special Envoys and Working Groups, including consulting focal points with designated civil society representatives, into a coherent institutional framework

51 MENA2050, *The MENA2050 IMEC Declaration*, 4 February 2026, https://www.mena2050.org/news/the-mena2050-imec-declaration; MENA2050, *Institutionalise to Implement: Which governance and security arrangements are best fit to advance the IMEC?*, Concept note, November 2026, section 1.5.

Either option would be complemented by an **annual IMEC Summit** of Heads of State and Government with regular ministerial meetings; an **IMEC Civil Society Council** and an **IMEC Parliamentary Conference**; an **IMEC Fund**, alongside joint sovereign-fund mechanisms where appropriate; and an **IMEC brand** with a sustained global communication campaign. The comparative analysis in Part II allows these hypotheses to be tested against the experience of other corridors, which is the purpose of the next section.

6. Security and resilience: IMEC as a system of systems

The comparison in Part II shows that security is the dimension in which corridor governance is least developed, and the Hormuz crisis has shown that it is the dimension in which IMEC is most exposed. This chapter draws the consequences for governance design. Its premise is that of the MENA2050 concept note: IMEC's relevance depends centrally on its **strategic resilience**, understood as the capacity of a system to continue operating, adapt and recover under attack, crisis or technical failure, in a degraded environment and under man-made or natural disruption.[52] Security in this sense is **continuity**, not only the protection of individual assets. It is also a condition of the corridor's economic promise: a corridor perceived as exposed will struggle to attract the long-term capital, insurers and operators it needs.

The primary language of this chapter is therefore that of **protection, continuity and resilience**. Defence cooperation has its place, but as the last of several layers, where required and politically feasible: if IMEC came to be perceived as a military alliance or a geopolitical bloc, important regional partners would hesitate to participate, and the corridor would lose the inclusiveness on which its value as a cooperation format depends.

6.1 Why governance and security cannot be designed in sequence

Three findings of the comparison make security a governance question rather than a purely operational one. First, **the choice of the constitutive instrument determines the reach of security cooperation**: a non-binding MoU cannot create incident-notification duties, investment-screening obligations or mutual assistance for repair, whereas a treaty annex can. Second, **security functions require an institutional owner**: risk mapping, information sharing, early warning and continuity planning are continuous activities that need a secretariat, a mandate and data. Third, **the absence of a security framework does not leave a vacuum; it leaves the field to whoever is willing to deploy**, as CPEC (a host-State division protecting a foreign investor's personnel) and the Red Sea (naval operations improvised after the attacks began) both demonstrate.

IMEC's routing exposure, analysed in section 3.6, is the clearest illustration. Sending the eastern maritime leg into ports inside the Strait of Hormuz, while Oman, whose ports lie outside it, was not a signatory, was possible only because no body had a mandate to run a corridor-level risk assessment. **Institutions are what prevent that class of error.** The OECD reaches the same conclusion from the infrastructure side: reliance on the Strait of Hormuz is "the most important bottleneck IMEC encounters, considering the current configuration of the corridor", the port of Fujairah "lacks sufficient capacity to absorb all trade in the event of a disruption", and policymakers "should therefore consider alternative gateways capable of bypassing the Strait of Hormuz", for which "the participation of Oman would be particularly relevant".[53]

52 MENA2050, *Institutionalise to Implement: Which governance and security arrangements are best fit to advance the IMEC?*, Concept note, November 2026, Part II, section 2.1.

53 OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, p. 62.

6.2 Strategic interdependence: shared assets, shared vulnerabilities

The interconnected nature of IMEC creates not only economic opportunities but also **shared vulnerabilities**. A corridor is only as strong as its weakest segment: the performance, safety and continuity of the whole depend on each port, rail link, border post, cable, data system and energy interconnection along the route. The same interdependence that ties participants into a common project transmits shocks across it: a disruption in one State becomes, within days, a problem for all the others, and a vulnerability that one participant tolerates is borne by everyone.

Managing strategic interdependence therefore means three things. First, **knowing the dependencies**: which flows, operators and systems depend on which assets, and where single points of failure lie. Second, **sharing the burden of protection**: the State hosting a critical node cannot be left alone with a risk whose consequences are corridor-wide. Third, **cooperating in sensitive and sovereign domains** (critical-infrastructure protection, cybersecurity, investment screening, data, crisis response), where States are traditionally least inclined to share information or authority. This is the strongest argument for a corridor institution: interdependence without institutions is vulnerability; interdependence organised by institutions becomes resilience.

6.3 A map of cross-domain and cascading risks

IMEC is a system of systems encompassing maritime routes, ports, railways, border and customs systems, digital networks, energy infrastructure, logistics and interconnected supply chains. The table below maps the main risk domains to the governance instruments that the comparison suggests for each.

Risk domain	Key exposures along IMEC	Governance response suggested by the comparison
Geopolitical and strategic	Regional conflict; dependence of the northern leg on Saudi–Jordanian–Israeli relations; strategic competition with alternative corridors	Segment-based governance able to advance where politically feasible; alternative-route planning; inter-corridor dialogue
Maritime routes and chokepoints	Strait of Hormuz; Bab el-Mandeb, Red Sea and Suez Canal for the all-sea alternative; Eastern Mediterranean sea lanes	Corridor-level redundancy plan (Fujairah, Khor Fakkan, Duqm, Salalah, Sohar); coordination with existing naval operations and information-sharing centres
Ports, logistics nodes and rail	Single points of failure at Haifa, at the Sheikh Hussein crossing and at the Jordanian and Saudi missing links	Critical-node register; continuity-of-operations standards in concession agreements; mutual assistance clauses
Borders, customs and regulation	Heterogeneous jurisdictions; absence of a transit regime; procedural friction in crises	Transit guarantee; pre-agreed crisis customs procedures (“green lanes”); single-window interoperability
Cyber and digital	Attacks on port community, rail-signalling and customs systems; subsea cables and landing stations	Cybersecurity baseline for corridor operators; incident reporting; cable-route diversity; landing-station ownership screening; repair-vessel arrangements
Energy infrastructure and supply	Gulf production and export infrastructure; electricity grids and interconnectors; renewable-energy and hydrogen corridors; pipelines; Eastern Mediterranean gas	Critical-entity designation; joint resilience testing; coordination with existing energy-security frameworks
Terrorism, sabotage,	Deniable attacks on infrastructure and on	Shared situational awareness; law-

Risk domain	Key exposures along IMEC	Governance response suggested by the comparison
hybrid threats	confidence in the corridor	enforcement cooperation; attribution cooperation; strategic communication
Safety and operational failures	Accidents, industrial incidents, climate-related disasters (heat, flooding, sandstorms)	Common safety standards; climate-resilience criteria in project appraisal; civil-protection mutual aid

The decisive category is the one that appears on no single line: **cross-domain and cascading risk**. A cyberattack on a port community system can halt rail flows; a closure at sea can saturate land crossings; an energy outage can disable signalling and customs; a border closure can strand cargo, idle rolling stock and trigger insurance and contractual disputes along the whole chain. Mitigating cascading disruptions requires mapping dependencies across systems, building circuit breakers (manual fallbacks, buffer capacity, pre-agreed alternative procedures) and testing the corridor against compound scenarios.

6.4 Prioritising: critical assets, bottlenecks and dependencies

A comprehensive risk list is a starting point, not a strategy. Resources for protection and redundancy are finite, and must be allocated where the combination of likelihood, impact and dependency is greatest. The table below offers a **first, indicative prioritisation** of IMEC's critical assets and bottlenecks. It is a qualitative assessment by the author on the basis of public sources, intended to structure discussion; it must be validated, quantified and kept up to date through a corridor-wide risk assessment conducted by the participants with operators and security authorities.

Critical asset or bottleneck	Systems and flows depending on it	Likelihood / impact	Existing capacity and redundancy	Gaps and required redundancy	Indicative recovery objective
Strait of Hormuz	Eastern maritime leg to Jebel Ali, Khalifa, Dammam; Gulf energy exports	High (demonstrated in 2026) / very high	Fujairah, Khor Fakkan; Omani ports (Sohar, Duqm, Salalah); Saudi land bridge by road	Gateway capacity outside the Strait; Oman's participation; pre-agreed rerouting procedures	Alternative routing activated within days
Bab el-Mandeb, Red Sea and Suez Canal	All-sea alternative between Asia and Europe; Red Sea subsea cables	High (2023–2026) / high	IMEC land bridge itself, once completed; Cape route	Completion of the land bridge; cable-route diversity	Diversion decisions within days; cable repair within weeks
Saudi–Jordanian rail link and Sheikh Hussein crossing	Entire northern land leg between the Gulf and the Mediterranean	Medium (political or security closure) / very high	Road trucking; Aqaba as alternative outlet	Rail missing links; gauge break in Jordan (1 050 mm); crisis customs procedures	Road fallback within days; reopening subject to political decision
Mediterranean gateways (Haifa, Ashdod)	Transshipment from land bridge to European ports	Medium to high / high	Spare capacity at both ports (OECD); Aqaba–Egypt alternatives under discussion	Alternative Mediterranean outlets; Egypt's association	Switch to alternative gateway within weeks
Port community, customs and rail-signalling IT systems	Clearance, tracking and movement of all cargo; data	Medium to high / high, cascading	National cyber agencies; manual fallback procedures	Corridor-wide incident reporting; tested backups;	Critical functions restored within

Critical asset or bottleneck	Systems and flows depending on it	Likelihood / impact	Existing capacity and redundancy	Gaps and required redundancy	Indicative recovery objective
	exchange between authorities			minimum cyber standards	hours
Subsea cables and landing stations (Red Sea, Eastern Mediterranean)	Digital backbone; trade data; financial flows; cloud services	Medium / high	Some route diversity; terrestrial routes across the Arabian Peninsula planned	Route diversity; landing-station screening; repair-vessel capacity	Traffic rerouted within hours; repair within weeks
Gulf energy infrastructure and future interconnectors	Electricity, hydrogen and fuel flows; power for ports, rail and data centres	Medium to high / high	National reserves; GCC interconnection grid	Joint resilience testing; protection of interconnectors and hydrogen pipelines	Supply restored within hours to days

6.5 Stress-testing the corridor: four scenarios

Prioritisation should be tested through specific scenarios, conducted as multinational crisis simulations bringing together governments, operators, insurers and security authorities. Four scenarios illustrate the questions that governance must be able to answer:

Scenario	Cascading effects	What must be in place beforehand
A. Simultaneous disruption in the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz	Both maritime alternatives to the land bridge degraded at once; surge on Omani and Fujairah ports and on road transport across the Arabian Peninsula; insurance premiums and freight rates spike	Redundancy plan with pre-identified gateways; pre-agreed customs "green lanes"; capacity-sharing arrangements among ports; a crisis cell able to convene within 24 hours
B. Cyberattack on ports and customs systems	Clearance halts at one or more gateways; rail and road flows back up; data integrity across the corridor in doubt	Minimum cyber standards for operators; corridor-wide incident reporting; tested manual fallbacks; trusted information-sharing channels between national cyber authorities
C. Prolonged closure of a border crossing	Northern land leg interrupted; cargo stranded; contractual and insurance disputes; political tension among participants	Alternative routing (e.g. via Aqaba); legal clarity on force majeure and liability; a political mechanism to address closures among participants
D. Failure of a major energy or digital node	Loss of power or connectivity for ports, signalling and data systems; cascading service failures	Critical-entity designation; redundancy of supply and routes; mutual assistance for repair; recovery-time objectives agreed in advance

6.6 What the comparison offers: four models of corridor security

Model	Examples	Strengths	Limits for IMEC
Legally fused economic and defence corridor	EU: TEN-T Regulation, military-mobility corridors, CER and NIS2 Directives, Cable Security Action Plan	Binding, funded, comprehensive	Requires a supranational legal order IMEC does not have; applicable on the European segment only
Host-State protection	CPEC Special Security Division	Clear responsibility	Burden and risk rest on the host; perceived as

Model	Examples	Strengths	Limits for IMEC
			militarisation; no corridor-wide view
Regional maritime architectures	Yaoundé Code of Conduct; Djibouti Code / Jeddah Amendment; ReCAAP ISC; Malacca Strait Patrols	Information sharing without supranational authority; inclusive	Maritime only; separate from economic governance
Ad hoc coalitions	EUNAVFOR Aspides and Atalanta; US-led maritime constructs	Rapid deployment	Reactive; politically contingent; no link to corridor operators

None of these models can simply be transposed to IMEC. The comparison nevertheless points to a **layered approach** in which the economic governance of the corridor owns the *civil* security and resilience functions, while *defence* functions remain with States and their existing alliances, linked to the corridor through structured coordination rather than integration. This is the formula of the model framework agreement: cooperation in the protection of corridor assets, without prejudice to the parties rights and obligations under other defence and security agreements.[54]

6.7 A layered Security and Resilience Framework

A corridor-wide framework could be organised in five layers, from the most consensual to the most sensitive, with trust and credibility as a cross-cutting objective:

Layer	Content	Owner within the IMEC architecture
1. Operational safety	Common safety standards for ports, rail and road; dangerous goods; climate-resilience criteria; accident reporting	Technical committees; national regulators; operators
2. Infrastructure and cyber resilience	Critical-node register; minimum security and cyber standards for operators; investment screening of critical assets; cable-route diversity and landing-station security; redundancy of maritime routes and gateways	Security and Resilience Committee; national regulators and cyber authorities; operators
3. Civil protection and law enforcement	Cooperation against terrorism, sabotage, organised crime and cargo crime; civil-protection mutual aid	Competent national authorities, coordinated through the Committee
4. Crisis management and continuity of operations	Early warning and corridor risk observatory; crisis cell; pre-agreed crisis customs procedures; continuity clauses in concessions; mutual assistance for repair; scenario exercises	Secretariat (observatory); crisis cell convened by the chair; Executive Committee; operators
5. Defence cooperation, where required and politically feasible	Calibrated to each segment's sensitivities; outside the corridor institution	States and existing alliances, with structured coordination
Cross-cutting: trust and strategic credibility	Transparent reporting on resilience; dialogue with insurers and investors; communication	Secretariat; Business Council; IMEC brand

Such a framework can begin **before** the corridor's institutions are fully formed: a corridor-wide dialogue on security and resilience among governments, operators, insurers and security communities, and a

54 MENA2050 IMEC Task Force, *Model Framework Agreement on the Governance of an Economic Corridor*, working draft, 15 July 2026 (prepared for this policy paper), Article 16.

sixth working group on security and resilience alongside the existing five (consolidating the cross-cutting treatment these issues currently receive within the trade, energy and digital groups), are short-term deliverables in the pathway proposed in Chapter 8.

6.8 From governance to security responsibilities

Governance arrangements matter for security only if they translate into identified responsibilities for risk management, decision-making and crisis response. The table below sets out how responsibilities could be allocated across the corridor, national and operator levels through the cycle of a disruption.

Phase	Corridor level (IMEC institutions)	National level	Operators and private sector
Prevention and preparedness	Corridor risk assessment; minimum resilience standards; scenario exercises; redundancy plan	Protection of critical entities; investment screening; national continuity plans	Compliance with standards; business-continuity plans; backups
Detection and early warning	Risk observatory; trusted information-sharing platform	Intelligence and cyber authorities; maritime and border agencies	Incident detection and reporting
Decision and activation	Crisis cell convened by the chair; activation of pre-agreed procedures	Sovereign decisions on borders, security and defence	Activation of contingency routing and capacity
Response and continuity	Coordination of rerouting, customs "green lanes", capacity sharing; public communication	Civil protection, law enforcement and, where required, defence	Operation of alternative routes; repair
Recovery and lessons learned	After-action review; update of risk map, standards and indicators	Reconstruction; regulatory adjustments	Restoration of services; insurance claims

Each category of actor also carries a distinct security role, at the level of the corridor as a whole and of each of its segments. States are responsible for protection, borders and crisis response. Business can contribute shared standards, cyber-threat information sharing and continuity plans. Civil society can provide early warning of local tensions and the public trust that makes the corridor less of a target. Security requirements also differ according to whether a segment involves ports, land routes, subsea infrastructure or a combination of them, and should be calibrated accordingly; transit between segments should remain supervised by the sovereign States concerned, with third-party security monitoring where needed.

6.9 Energy security: from the Gulf to the Eastern Mediterranean

The energy dimension of IMEC extends well beyond the Eastern Mediterranean. It includes the Gulf's production and export infrastructure, which the 2026 crisis has shown to be exposed; electricity grids and the interconnectors envisaged by the MoU; renewable-energy and green-hydrogen corridors and the pipelines that would carry them; and the maritime routes through the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal on which energy flows between Asia, the Gulf and Europe depend. In the Eastern Mediterranean, offshore gas infrastructure and the wider relationship between connectivity, energy security and European strategic resilience add a further layer.[55] Energy assets also power the rest of the corridor: ports, rail signalling, data centres and customs systems all fail when energy fails. Energy security should therefore be integrated into the corridor-wide risk map, with

55 On the energy indicators proposed for IMEC, and the absence of regional energy planning and harmonised market rules, see OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, Chapter 2.

critical-entity designation, joint resilience testing of interconnectors and coordination with existing energy-security frameworks.

6.10 Digital-security governance: the backbone and the frontline

The MENA2050 Declaration identifies digital cooperation as the fastest and least politically exposed pathway to progress. The corollary is that the digital backbone is also a major vulnerability. If paperless trade, interoperable customs and trusted data flows are to catalyse the corridor, six governance questions must be answered:

- **Data sovereignty**: which data stay under national control, which are shared, and on what legal basis, given the four incompatible regime families crossed by IMEC (section 3.7);
- **Trusted information sharing**: a platform and protocols for sharing threat and incident information among national authorities and with operators;
- **Classification rules**: a common, simple scheme (for instance on the model of the Traffic Light Protocol widely used by computer emergency response teams) defining who may receive which information;
- **Cyber incident reporting**: obligations and timelines for operators of critical corridor systems to report incidents to national authorities, and for authorities to alert their counterparts;
- **Responsibility for shared platforms**: who owns, operates, secures and is liable for corridor-wide systems such as linked Single Windows, cargo-tracking or data-exchange platforms;
- **Cooperation among national authorities and private operators**: joint exercises and standing channels between cyber agencies, customs, port authorities and telecommunications providers.

The five instruments identified in section 3.7 (transfer basis, government-access discipline, non-self-judging security exception, interoperable electronic documents and a physical-layer security regime) are as much security instruments as trade instruments, and should be negotiated together with these six elements.

6.11 The private sector as operational partner, and who pays for resilience

Ports, shipping companies, logistics operators, telecommunications providers, energy companies, insurers and investors control much of the infrastructure and of the information required for resilience. They should be treated as **operational partners**, not merely as consulted stakeholders: they detect incidents first, operate the alternative routes and repair the damage. The IMEC Ports Club, launched in October 2026, is a natural first channel; the proposed Business Council should have a standing link to the Security and Resilience Committee.

Three questions follow, which governance must settle explicitly. **Who pays for resilience?** Redundant capacity, backups and protection have costs that no single operator will bear for the benefit of the whole corridor; a combination of public funding, blended finance and the IMEC Fund is needed for corridor-wide redundancy. **How are risks distributed?** Agreed principles on force majeure, liability, insurance and compensation in a disruption reduce disputes when they matter most. **Should resilience be a condition of finance and insurance?** Making compliance with minimum resilience standards a condition of the IMEC label, of IMEC Fund financing and, in dialogue with insurers, of insurance terms would create a powerful incentive at low public cost.

One instrument deserves early consideration for the distribution of risk: a **corridor war-risk insurance pool**, constituted by operators and insurers with public or multilateral backstops where needed, which would keep cover available and affordable in the segments most exposed to conflict.

6.12 Measuring resilience: from risk identification to resilience assessment

Beyond mapping threats and vulnerabilities, IMEC needs indicators to assess its strategic and operational resilience over time. These could be integrated into the IMEC Observatory alongside the OECD Corridors' Connectivity Scoreboard.

Dimension	Indicative indicators	Possible sources
Critical dependencies	Share of corridor flows passing through each critical node; number of single points of failure; concentration of digital traffic on individual cables or landing stations	Corridor risk assessment; operators; cable consortia
Bottlenecks	Capacity utilisation at gateways and border crossings; dwell and transit times and their variability	OECD Scoreboard; port and customs authorities
Alternative routes	Number of operational alternatives for each segment; spare capacity available on each alternative; time needed to switch	Redundancy plan; operators
Recovery capability	Recovery time after incidents (actual against objective); repair-vessel and spare-part availability; results of exercises	Incident reports; after-action reviews
Preparedness and governance	Share of critical operators meeting minimum standards; incident-reporting compliance; frequency of crisis exercises	Secretariat; national regulators

6.13 Inter-corridor connectivity as a source of resilience

The relationship between IMEC and other connectivity networks is a resilience question as much as an economic one. The OECD describes IMEC as evolving towards a "network of corridors", a pragmatic response to disruption.[56] Alternative routes only provide resilience if they are **operationally interoperable**: compatible standards, mutually recognised documents and procedures, and pre-agreed arrangements for switching flows. IMEC's resilience strategy should therefore include the **diversification of transport, energy and digital connections** (alternative gateways, interconnectors and cable routes) and structured cooperation with adjacent corridors (the Middle Corridor, the Development Road, TEN-T corridors, the Three Seas Initiative and East African corridors), including an inter-corridor redundancy study as a pilot project. Viewed in this light, competing corridors are also each other's insurance policy.

6.14 Security of the IMEC, security through the IMEC

This chapter has so far asked how IMEC can be protected. An equally important question runs in the opposite direction: **how can IMEC itself contribute to security and peace?** The relationship between connectivity and security is two-way. Security enables the corridor; the corridor, in turn, can help strengthen security. For MENA2050, whose purpose is regional peace and cooperation, this second dimension is not a footnote but a central part of the argument. IMEC is not only an infrastructure initiative that requires protection; it is also a potential platform for building shared interests, sustained dialogue and practical cooperation across a fragmented region.

The underlying mechanism deserves to be made explicit. As participating countries develop a shared stake in the corridor's success, they gain additional incentives to maintain communication, manage disagreements and preserve regional stability. Regular cooperation among public authorities, businesses and infrastructure operators builds working relationships and habits of coordination that can support cooperation beyond the corridor itself. IMEC's phased, segment-by-segment

56 OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, pp. 16–18.

implementation matters here: each segment that delivers creates new realities on the ground, in socioeconomic development, in patterns of cooperation and in mindsets. Through concrete benefits, IMEC-driven cooperation can foster conditions conducive to political and diplomatic dynamics, in a virtuous and cumulative process that opens new prospects for coexistence, security and stability and, ultimately, contributes to the factors of lasting peace.

Within MENA2050, this strategic vision has been developed in particular by **Prof. Shlomo Hasson**, Professor Emeritus at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who approaches IMEC at the level of regional strategy and of civil society: as an instrument of strategic resilience and integrative regional development, not merely a trade and infrastructure corridor. He contrasts "war management", which has focused "on containing violence and administering ceasefires without addressing underlying political economies", with "strategic integration", which "seeks to create shared stakes that make renewed conflict costly and cooperation rational". In his words, "IMEC is not a peace agreement, a military alliance, or an ideological project. Rather, it is an infrastructure-and-governance platform designed to reshape incentives, sequencing, and behavior over time. Its strength lies precisely in its functional character: it allows cooperation to advance without requiring comprehensive political settlements at the outset."

The key is sequenced integration. Cooperation can begin in low-politics domains (customs digitisation, logistics harmonisation, port modernisation, energy interconnections and digital trade facilitation), steps which "require coordination rather than reconciliation, and they build administrative routines, regulatory familiarity, and technical trust that can later support deeper political agreements". Tied to corridor participation, reconstruction "creates employment, restores basic services, and strengthens state legitimacy", while "armed non-state actors become economic liabilities rather than strategic assets". In this perspective, IMEC "will not replace diplomacy", but it "can change the political economy in which diplomacy operates", and Europe, Switzerland and Norway can play a distinctive role in standards, financing, neutral facilitation and confidence-building. As Prof. Hasson concludes: "The choice facing the region is not between ideal peace and inevitable conflict. It is between drifting in unresolved risk and investing in structured, incremental integration that makes peace more achievable over time." (S. Hasson, 'From War Management to Strategic Integration? The IMEC Moment', MENA2050, March 2026; see also his policy note on connectivity, resilience and regional integration, June 2026.)

Economic interdependence does not automatically produce peace. The dense commercial ties of pre-1914 Europe did not prevent the First World War, and interdependence can also be turned into leverage. What makes the difference is institutional: whether shared interests are organised by bodies that keep channels open in times of tension, distribute benefits visibly and fairly, and give the parties a lasting stake in continuity. This is where the **governance–security nexus** at the heart of this paper becomes fundamental. The institutions proposed in chapter 8 (a summit and ministerial cycle, a permanent secretariat, segment committees, a Business Council and a Civil Society Council) are not only instruments of implementation; they are also standing channels of dialogue that can outlast crises. History also shows that patterns of administrative cooperation within a politically fragmented and conflictual regional system can deliver functional projects and mutual benefits, as the Ottoman experience recalled in the box on four zones of governing operation illustrates (section 8.3).

This perspective also responds to a legitimate concern about an excessively militarised reading of corridor security, of which the CPEC model is the clearest illustration (section 6.6). It broadens the security perspective without diminishing the need to protect the corridor and its infrastructure, and it is consistent with the layered framework of section 6.7, whose primary language is protection, continuity and resilience. Indeed, the security of IMEC as a system of systems also depends on its ability to be a regional driver of enhanced, holistic security: a corridor whose benefits are widely shared and whose institutions are trusted is both a less attractive target and a more resilient one.

Modern history offers instructive, if uneven, precedents of shared economic projects and institutions contributing to reconciliation and stability:

Precedent	What it did	Lesson for IMEC
Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (1815)	Created by the Congress of Vienna, it is the oldest international organisation still in existence, and has governed navigation on a river long at the heart of Franco-German rivalry.	Technical institutions can outlast the conflicts of the States that created them.
European Coal and Steel Community (1951)	Proposed in the Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950 to make war between France and Germany "not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible" by pooling the industries of war; the nucleus of the European Union.	Joint management of strategic assets can turn former adversaries into partners.
Mekong Committee (1957), Mekong River Commission (1995)	Established by Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and South Vietnam, the Committee continued to function through the Indochina wars before being succeeded by the Mekong River Commission.	Technical cooperation can keep channels open when political ones close.
Indus Waters Treaty (1960)	Brokered by the World Bank between India and Pakistan; its Permanent Indus Commission kept functioning through several conflicts, until India placed the Treaty in abeyance in April 2025.	Durable, but not immune to political shocks: institutions require continuous political investment.
Qualifying Industrial Zones (1996 onwards)	Created by US legislation following the Israel–Jordan peace treaty of 1994, giving duty-free access to the US market to goods combining Jordanian and Israeli inputs; extended to Egypt in 2004.	Tangible economic dividends can give peace agreements a constituency.

BOX

Security of the IMEC, security through the IMEC

The governance–security nexus works in both directions: security enables the corridor, and the corridor, well governed, strengthens security.

Security of the IMEC: protecting the corridor

– protection of critical physical and digital infrastructure;
– maritime route, port and subsea-cable security;
– early warning, information sharing and crisis response;
– continuity of operations, redundancy and rapid recovery;
– minimum resilience standards and measurable indicators;
– defence cooperation only where required and politically feasible.

Security through the IMEC: the corridor as a factor of security

– a shared stake in success, raising the value of cooperation and the cost of conflict;
– habits of coordination among authorities, operators and businesses;
– standing channels of dialogue that can outlast crises;
– development dividends: jobs, trade, investment, energy and water;
– inclusive participation and civil-society ownership;
– confidence built segment by segment, as new realities on the ground.

Governance is the bridge between the two. The institutions that protect the corridor are also those that sustain cooperation through it: governance and security must therefore be designed together, as one architecture.

7. Stakeholder perspectives and the feasibility of governance options

A governance architecture is only as good as its acceptability to those who must adopt it. This chapter sets out, as an analytical assessment by the author rather than a statement of any government's position, how the main IMEC partners and neighbours are likely to approach the institutional options, on the basis of their legal traditions, their past practice in comparable formats and their stated priorities. The purpose is to identify the zone of possible agreement.

7.1 The founding signatories

Partner	Governance culture and past practice	Likely approach to IMEC institutions
India	Strong attachment to strategic autonomy and to sovereignty over regulation; preference for flexible, non-treaty plurilateral formats (G20 initiatives, Quad working groups); a negative-list data regime (DPDP Act 2023) with sectoral localisation; bilateral operationalisation of IMEC (India–UAE framework agreement, 2024)	Supportive of a stronger coordination mechanism and of a visible IMEC summit process; cautious about a supranational secretariat, binding data rules and majority voting; likely to favour a charter-based model with consensus on sensitive matters and opt-in technical annexes
European Union	Rules-based institutional culture; TEN-T and Global Gateway as reference; strong standards (GDPR, CER, NIS2); exclusive or shared competences that may require a mixed agreement if a treaty is concluded	Natural advocate of a permanent secretariat, technical annexes and a performance observatory; able to contribute financing and standards; must coordinate its position with France, Germany and Italy, each of which has its own IMEC envoy
France, Germany, Italy	National envoys and port and industrial interests (Marseille, Trieste and the Mediterranean gateways)	Supportive of institutionalisation; potential competition over hosting, seats and gateway ports, which a transparent route annex and rotating functions can defuse
Saudi Arabia	Pragmatic, project- and capital-driven; national rail and logistics ambitions under Vision 2030; the northern land leg runs through its territory	Interested in financing structures and in decision-making weight commensurate with its role; prudent about any formal arrangement implying recognition steps with Israel while the political context does not allow it; favourable to segment-based governance
United Arab Emirates	Deal-driven, operator-led (DP World, AD Ports); early mover through the India–UAE framework agreement; diversification towards ports east of Hormuz (Fujairah, Khor Fakkan)	Supportive of fast, practical mechanisms, a Business Council with real weight and a digital backbone; may prefer a light, efficient secretariat to a heavy organisation; plausible candidate host
United States	Co-founder; preference for coalitions and investment-led partnerships over new international organisations; development finance through the DFC	Likely to support political momentum, financing mobilisation and private-sector leadership; sceptical of a treaty-based organisation with assessed contributions; open to a G7/G20 sherpa-track anchoring

7.2 Corridor-relevant States outside the MoU

State	Stake in IMEC	Governance implication
Oman	Ports at Duqm, Salalah and Sohar lie outside the Strait of Hormuz; "de facto becoming a key component of the corridor network" (OECD); Hafeet Rail link to Abu Dhabi ratified in 2026	Priority candidate for observer status, then accession; the OECD finds its participation "particularly relevant"; justifies a route annex amendable by the political organ
Jordan	Indispensable transit State on the northern land leg; "the most critical missing link" (OECD), with a 1 050 mm rail gauge; has requested formal membership, created an Inter-Agency IMEC Task Force and promotes Aqaba as a hub	Cannot remain outside the governance of the segment it hosts; priority for membership, technical and financial support for rail interoperability
Israel	Ports of Haifa and Ashdod as Mediterranean gateways, currently at about half capacity (OECD); has requested formal membership	Participation calibrated to political conditions; the governance design must allow the northern leg to advance or pause without blocking the rest
Greece, Cyprus and other EU Member States	Piraeus and Thessaloniki gateways; Eastern Mediterranean energy and cable routes; Greece has an IMEC Special Envoy; Cyprus leads a "Friends of IMEC" group (with Greece, Croatia, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia); Malta interested	Observers and potential parties; an EU coordination question (Member States joining individually alongside the EU)
Egypt	Suez Canal revenues; Eastern Mediterranean ports and gas; has requested to take part in IMEC, with the support of France, Italy and the European Commission; proposals for an "IMEC-E" branch via the Saudi–Egypt Red Sea link	From perceived competitor to partner: observer status, then association; joint resilience planning given Red Sea exposure
Türkiye and Iraq	Promoters of the Development Road (Iraq–Türkiye–Qatar–UAE MoU, April 2024); Türkiye's President stated in September 2023 that there could be "no corridor without Turkey"	Inter-corridor governance rather than membership: cooperation agreements, interoperability, complementarity in the MENA2050 spirit of non-zero-sum connectivity
Lebanon and Syria	Ports of Beirut, Tripoli, Latakia and Tartus, whose traffic has increased since 2026; Lebanon held a first technical IMEC meeting in June 2026; Syria's role contingent on stability	Longer-term association through segment arrangements and inter-corridor links

Sources for this table: OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, pp. 16–18 and 61–62, and the sources cited in section 5.2.

7.3 The zone of possible agreement

Three conclusions follow. First, **a full treaty-based organisation is not attainable in the short term**: it would require ratifications in States with very different constitutional procedures, a mixed agreement on the EU side, and political conditions on the northern leg that do not yet exist. Second, **the status quo is not acceptable either**: every signatory has an interest in a mechanism that can coordinate finance, standards and resilience, and the Hormuz crisis has shown the cost of having none. Third, the overlap between the partners' preferences lies in a **charter-based institution with a light permanent secretariat**, consensus on constitutive matters, opt-in technical annexes, a strong Business Council, an observer category and a security and resilience pillar limited to civil functions. This is the convergence point between the MENA2050 hypotheses of an IMEC Alliance and an IMEC Organization, and the bridge between them.

7.4 Assessing the options against explicit criteria

The four options described in Chapter 8 can be scored against eight criteria derived from the comparison. The scores (1 = weak, 5 = strong) are the author's judgement, based on the evidence in

Parts II and III; the weights reflect the priorities of the MENA2050 Declaration (governance, continuity and financing). They are offered as a structured basis for discussion, not as a mechanical answer.

Criterion	Weight	Option 0 Soft coordination	Option 1 Alliance	Option 2 Hosted Secretariat / Charter	Option 3 Organization (treaty)
Speed and political feasibility now	15%	5	4	3	1
Continuity across changes of government	15%	1	2	4	5
Coordination and implementation capacity	15%	1	2	4	5
Financing mobilisation	15%	2	2	4	4
Reach into security, resilience and data	10%	1	2	3	5
Openness: accession and inter-corridor relations	10%	2	3	4	5
Flexibility (segments, variable geometry)	10%	5	4	4	3
Ownership by IMEC partners	10%	3	5	3	4
Weighted score (out of 5)	100%	**2.45**	**2.90**	**3.65**	**3.95**

On this basis, the **treaty-based Organization** obtains the highest overall score (3.95), but it is also the only option that scores lowest on feasibility: it is the right destination, not an available starting point. Among the options attainable within the next two years, the **charter-based model with a hosted or light permanent secretariat** clearly leads (3.65), well ahead of the Alliance (2.90) and of structured soft coordination (2.45). The result supports the sequencing logic of Chapter 8: the charter is not an alternative to the Organization but the stage that makes it possible, and it should be designed from the outset so that its organs, rules and annexes can be carried over unchanged into a future Framework Agreement.

The scoring is deliberately transparent so that it can be challenged. Changing the weights shifts the totals at the margin (a reader who prioritises speed above all will favour the Alliance), but it does not reverse the main finding: the status quo scores lowest on every weighting that gives any value to continuity or implementation.

8. Pathways for the governance of the IMEC

8.1 Design principles

The comparative evidence and the specific features of IMEC suggest eight design principles for its governance architecture:

1. **Institutionalise to implement.** Move from soft coordination to a standing institutional framework, in sequence, with explicit deadlines for each transition.
2. **Govern the whole, operate by segments.** A corridor-level framework setting common rules and priorities, combined with segment-level vehicles (concessions, SPVs, bilateral agreements) that can advance independently, calibrated to political sensitivities.

3. **Variable geometry with a common core.** Consensus on constitutive matters; opt-in or qualified-majority adoption of technical annexes, so that willing participants can move ahead without leaving the framework.
4. **Openness by design.** An accession clause, observer and associate categories, and a route annex amendable by the political organ.
5. **Multilateral consistency.** Facilitation measures framed by WTO rules on freedom of transit and trade facilitation, recognised international standards (UNECE, UN/CEFACT, UNCITRAL MLETR) and WTO-consistent industrial policies.
6. **Security and resilience as a constituent pillar**, embedded in the architecture from the outset.
7. **Inclusive ownership**: operators, financiers, civil society, parliaments and local authorities associated through formal channels.
8. **Complementarity, not rivalry**: IMEC conceived as part of an emerging ecosystem of corridors, with inter-corridor interoperability as an explicit objective.

8.2 Four governance options

Combining the five archetypes with the two working hypotheses of the MENA2050 Declaration (an IMEC Organization and an IMEC Alliance) yields four realistic options, which are not mutually exclusive and can be read as successive stages:

	Option 0 · Structured soft coordination	Option 1 · IMEC Alliance	Option 2 · Hosted IMEC Secretariat	Option 3 · IMEC Organization
Archetype	Political-declaratory (3), strengthened	Intergovernmental meeting scheme (3→2)	Hosted programmatic (5) + intergovernmental	Treaty-based (2), with supranational-style techniques
Instrument	Existing MoU + agreed rules of procedure	Political charter endorsed by leaders	Charter + hosting agreement with an international institution	Framework Agreement (treaty) with technical annexes
Political organ	Envoys' meetings; ministerials on G20 margins	Annual summit; ministerials; annually rotating presidency in fixed order	Annual summit; Council of Ministers	Summit; Council of Ministers; Executive Committee
Secretariat	None; chair's team	None permanent; chairing country coordinates; project staffs	Light permanent unit hosted by an MDB or international organisation	Permanent Secretariat with legal personality and seat
Financing	Ad hoc	Project-specific	Trust fund; project preparation facility	Assessed contributions + IMEC Fund + blended-finance facility
Legal certainty	Very low	Low	Medium	High
Speed / feasibility now	Immediate	High (12–18 months)	Medium (18–24 months)	Low (3–5 years, ratifications)
Continuity across governments	Weak	Weak to medium (depends on presidency)	Medium to strong	Strong
Reach into security and data	Dialogue only	Political coordination	Technical frameworks, information sharing	Binding annexes, incident notification, dispute settlement
Accession	Undefined	By leaders' decision	By Council decision; observers	Accession clause; observer and associate status

	Option 0 · Structured soft coordination	Option 1 · IMEC Alliance	Option 2 · Hosted IMEC Secretariat	Option 3 · IMEC Organization
Main risk	Drift; Hormuz-type errors repeated	Momentum depends on each presidency	Ownership deficit; dependence on host	Ratification lag; heavy negotiation

Option 0 formalises the present: the Steering Committee of Sherpas and Special Envoys and its five Working Groups, with published rules of procedure, a common work plan and regular ministerial meetings. It is indispensable as a first step but insufficient on its own: the comparison is unambiguous that declaratory frameworks without a standing body lose traction. **Option 1**, the Alliance, mirrors the model of rotating presidencies familiar from the G20 or the Council of the EU. It has the virtue of political ownership and the vice of discontinuity, as each presidency sets its own priorities and no institution holds memory between them. **Option 2**, a secretariat hosted by an existing institution, borrows the CAREC and GMS technique: technical quality and access to finance from the outset, at the price of an ownership deficit and of dependence on the host. Its feasibility depends on finding a host acceptable to all participants, a non-trivial question in IMEC's geometry; a trust-fund arrangement co-hosted by more than one institution, or a host-country agreement in a neutral seat, are possible variants. **Option 3**, the Organization, is the destination: the only option that provides legal personality, assessed contributions, enforceable technical annexes, dispute settlement and an accession clause.

8.3 Beyond a binary choice: a hybrid architecture

The choice between an IMEC Organization and an IMEC Alliance, as formulated in the MENA2050 Declaration, is a useful way to frame the debate, but it should not be presented as the only alternative. The comparison shows that most functioning corridors are **hybrids**, combining elements of two or three archetypes. A more realistic model for IMEC, in the short and medium term, is a hybrid architecture combining five elements; the Organization and the Alliance remain possible long-term outcomes, between which the partners can choose once the hybrid has proved its worth.

Element	Function	What exists today	What needs to be added
Political direction	Strategic priorities, arbitration, enlargement	Ministerial level foreseen; leaders' statements	Regular ministerial meetings; periodic IMEC Summit; rotating chair
A small permanent coordination unit	Continuity, preparation, monitoring, memory	None as such; support from one of the working groups listed below	A light secretariat with seconded and recruited staff, hosted, with a budget line
Sectoral groups	Technical work in each domain	Five working groups (strategy, coordination and studies; transport; energy; digital; financing), not all functioning; security and resilience treated as cross-cutting within the trade, energy and digital groups	Trade-facilitation group (OECD proposal) and a dedicated security and resilience group; published mandates
Project-specific entities	Implementation: procurement, construction, operation	Bilateral frameworks, concessions, national authorities, criteria for labelling "IMEC projects"	Segment committees; SPVs and concessions meeting IMEC standards
A common technical platform	Standards, information and interoperability	OECD Scoreboard (first baseline)	Shared platform for standards, data, risk information and monitoring (the future Observatory)

The hybrid is not a compromise by default. It reflects the corridor's nature as a plurilateral cooperation format with an intergovernmental basis, in which the private sector plays a paramount role and in which segments advance at different speeds. It can be put in place without a treaty, using elements that already exist, and it can evolve into either long-term form without being dismantled.

The hybrid can also be given a geographical dimension. Because not all IMEC partners are at peace with one another, not all are signatories, and operational theatres differ from one stretch of the corridor to another, the project-specific entities and segment committees could be grouped into **zones of operation**, each aligning the States and stakeholders concerned, under the coordination of the corridor-level bodies. Prof. Micheline Ishay, a member of the MENA2050 IMEC Task Force, has proposed such a composition in four zones, presented in the box that follows. It is compatible with the hybrid architecture and with each of the long-term options: the zones would operate within the corridor-level institutions, not in place of them.

BOX

Four zones of governing operation under a broad IMEC governing umbrella: Prof. Micheline Ishay's proposal for the composition of IMEC's governance

Prof. Micheline Ishay, member of the MENA2050 IMEC Task Force

Some form of governance has always been essential to the development of the region's great connectivity projects: Prof. Ishay recalls that the Hejaz Railway relied on the Ottoman Public Debt Administration established in 1881. The same holds for IMEC, which needs a **central IMEC body** to coordinate its diverse governing operations.

Her proposal starts from a framing question that should, in her view, guide the whole endeavour: **which zones should be governed, and by whom?** Different States and their associated stakeholders need to be aligned in different zones. Not all the countries concerned are at peace with one another (Israel and Saudi Arabia, Syria and Lebanon), not all are signatories, and operational theatres vary from one zone to another. IMEC is therefore framed as **four zones of governing operation under a broad IMEC governing umbrella**, each with forms of security adapted to its ports, land routes or both.

Zone 1 · India / Gulf *Security: maritime and ports*	Customs and data agreement between India, the UAE and Saudi Arabia; joint maritime security cell. Next step: a joint investment platform once the first pilot cargo flows.
Zone 2 · Jordanian hub *Security: land*	A north–south axis (Turkey–Syria–Aqaba) and an east–west axis (Jordan to Israel/Palestine, and Jordan to Iraq). Jordan joins as a segment partner; sealed-cargo transit at the Saudi–Jordanian border. Next step: a Jordanian hub authority as traffic grows.
Zone 3 · Israel / Palestine (standby) *Security: port and land*	An inclusive nexus with Palestinian economic participation, backed by a neutral guarantor; prepared now as a protocol, and switched on when politics allow.
Zone 4 · Eastern Mediterranean and Europe *Security: ports and subsea*	Anchored in EU rules and funding; an alliance of Mediterranean ports; a security layer for energy infrastructure and subsea cables.

Tripartite governance at every level. The main IMEC body and each zone would be governed in a tripartite way, with every sector carrying a security role:

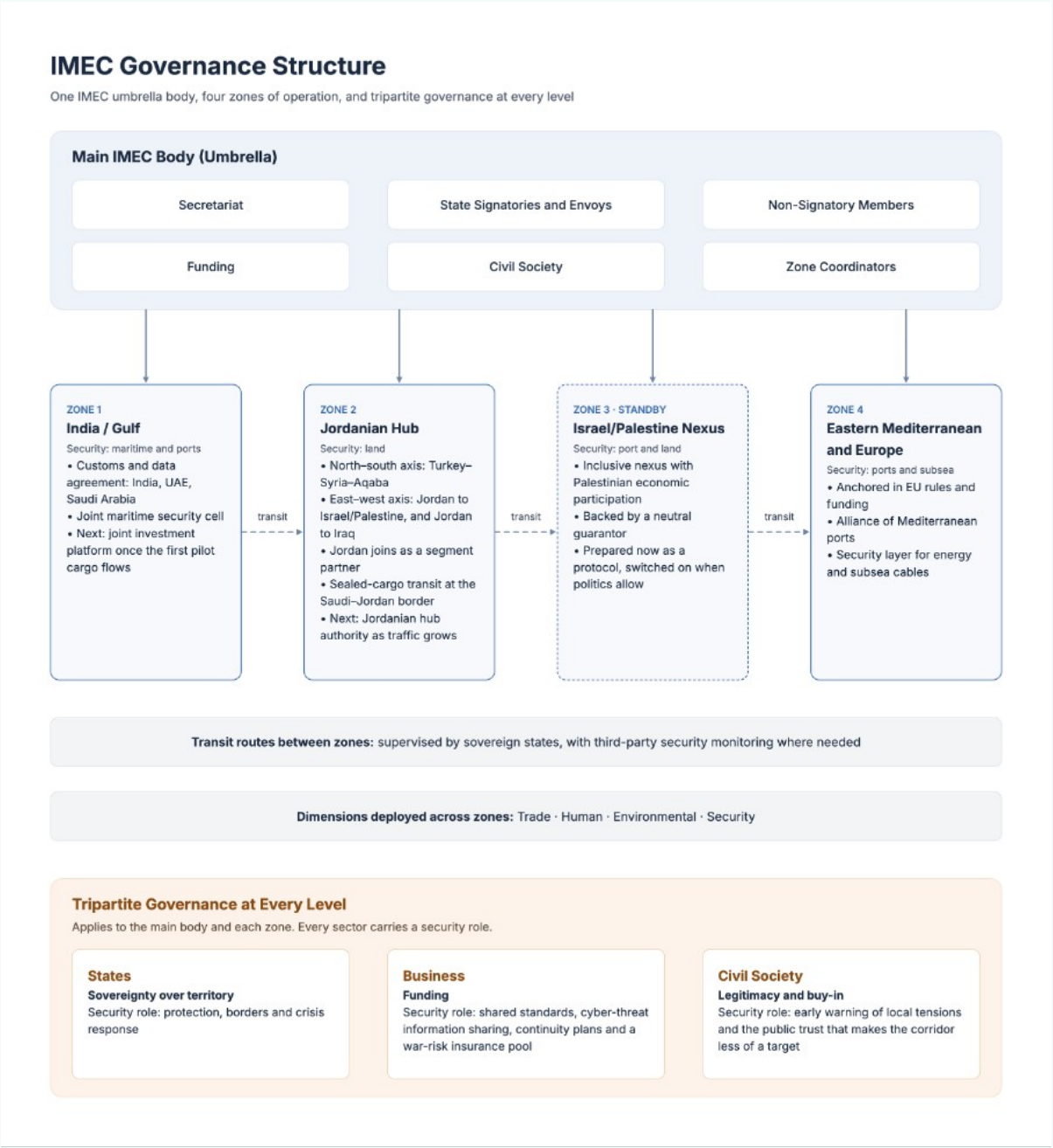
- **States**, as sovereigns over their territories, responsible for protection, borders and crisis response;
- **business**, for funding, contributing shared standards, cyber-threat information sharing, continuity plans and a war-risk insurance pool;
- **civil society**, for legitimacy and buy-in, providing early warning of local tensions and the public trust that makes the corridor less of a target.

Under one umbrella. The main IMEC body would bring together a secretariat, the State signatories and their envoys, non-signatory members, funding, civil society and zone coordinators. Trade, job creation, digital, environmental and security dimensions would be deployed differently across the zones and their structures, under the coordination of the central body. Transit routes between zones would be supervised by the sovereign States, with third parties providing security monitoring where needed.

Source: contribution of Prof. Micheline Ishay to this policy paper (November 2026); see also M. Ishay, The India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor: Mapping the Future on a Historical Legacy, MENA2050, July 2026, https://www.mena2050.org/news/the-india-middle-east-europe-corridor%3A--mapping-the-future-on-a-historical-legacy.

BOX (CONTINUED)

Figure · IMEC governance structure: one IMEC umbrella body, four zones of operation, and tripartite governance at every level



Source: Prof. Micheline Ishay, MENA2050 IMEC Task Force (November 2026).

8.4 A sequenced pathway

The evidence suggests that IMEC should not choose between these options but **sequence** them, each stage having a defined deliverable and deadline, so that the transition from MoU to instrument, which most corridors fail to make, is planned rather than hoped for.

Horizon	Institutional step	Substantive deliverables
Short term (2026–2027)	First IMEC ministerial meeting; Steering Committee given published rules of procedure and a rotating chair; Strategy, Coordination and Studies WG turned into a light technical secretariat (seconded staff, hosted); sixth WG on security and resilience; IMEC consultation platform on trade facilitation (OECD proposal); Ports Club associated as nucleus of a Business Council; decisions on membership requests and an observer category; public information and contact points	Prioritised risk and dependency map and redundancy plan (including routes outside the Straits of Hormuz and Bab al-Mandab); first multinational crisis simulation; digital-backbone pilot (paperless trade, e-documents, customs data exchange); IMEC label applied to a short list of 10–15 prepared projects with published selection criteria; OECD Scoreboard adopted as baseline for monitoring; corridor-wide dialogue on security and resilience
Medium term (2027–2029)	IMEC Charter endorsed at a first IMEC Summit, consolidating the hybrid architecture and setting the long-term form (Alliance, Organization or an evolved hybrid); Council of Ministers; Executive Committee; permanent secretariat; IMEC Fund and project preparation facility; Business Council; IMEC Civil Society Council and Parliamentary Conference	Trade-facilitation programme (transit guarantee, one-stop border posts, mutual recognition of AEO status); digital and data framework; preliminary Security and Resilience Framework (layered: safety, infrastructure and cyber resilience, civil protection, crisis management and continuity); minimum resilience standards for IMEC-labelled projects; IMEC Observatory publishing connectivity and resilience indicators
Long term (2029 onwards)	IMEC Framework Agreement establishing the IMEC Organization with legal personality; inter-corridor cooperation agreements	Binding technical annexes; dispute settlement; accession clause; positioning of IMEC as a constructive contributor to the new layer of global economic governance

Sequencing in time can be combined with sequencing in space. Zones of operation can advance at their own pace. Where the partners are ready, as between India and the Gulf, customs and data agreements, joint maritime security arrangements and pilot cargo flows can move first; elsewhere, arrangements can be prepared now as protocols and activated when political conditions allow. The corridor as a whole is then not held hostage to its most difficult segment.

8.5 Following the implementation chain: who is responsible for what

Governance must follow the implementation chain. At each stage of a project's life, and in a disruption, it should be clear who decides, who acts and who answers. The matrix below proposes an allocation of responsibilities within the hybrid architecture; the right-hand column indicates where responsibility lies today, to the author's knowledge.

Stage	Corridor level (IMEC bodies)	National level	Project entities, operators, financiers	Today
Identify and prioritise projects	Ministerial meeting decides on priorities on the basis of Steering Committee proposals; IMEC label with published criteria	National plans; national IMEC coordinators	Proposals from operators and investors	Steering Committee; labelling criteria elaborated (June 2026), not published
Assess feasibility and security	Coordination unit commissions corridor studies; security and resilience group reviews critical projects	Feasibility, environmental and security assessments; investment screening	Feasibility studies; risk assessments	Strategy WG; security treated within the trade, energy and digital groups; national studies, several not public
Prepare projects for financing	Project preparation facility; Financing group	Sovereign guarantees; PPP frameworks	Transaction structuring; MDBs and DFIs	Financing WG; no facility
Procure, construct and operate	Common standards; interoperability requirements	Procurement; permits; concessions	Construction and operation under concession or SPV	National and bilateral
Monitor performance	Observatory publishing indicators; annual report	Data submission by statistical, customs and port authorities	Operational data	OECD Scoreboard (one-off, 2026)
Act during a disruption	Crisis cell; activation of pre-agreed procedures; coordination of rerouting	Sovereign decisions; civil protection; law enforcement; defence where required	Contingency operations; repair	No corridor-level mechanism
Account for delivery	Ministerial meeting and Summit, on the basis of the public annual report	Parliaments; national audit bodies	Contractual liability; lender oversight	No public reporting

The last column is the most telling. For most stages, IMEC today has a working group or a national actor, but no corridor-level body with a clear mandate, and no public accountability. Closing these gaps does not require a treaty; it requires mandates, a coordination unit and transparency.

8.6 Building blocks of the architecture

Building on what already exists

The architecture proposed here does not start from scratch. Since 2025, the signatories have created a Steering Committee, five working groups, criteria for labelling "IMEC projects" and, with the private sector, an IMEC Ports Club; and the OECD has produced a Corridors' Connectivity Scoreboard for IMEC and offered continued support.[57] Each of these can be carried into the future institution: the Steering Committee as the Executive Committee; the working groups as technical committees; the label as the gateway to a prioritised Investment Framework with published criteria; the Ports Club as the core of a Business Council; and the OECD Scoreboard as the baseline methodology of an IMEC Observatory, with the OECD and the International Transport Forum as knowledge partners. This continuity lowers the political cost of institutionalisation: it formalises and completes, rather than replaces, what partners have already built.

57 OECD (2026), *Measuring Connectivity across the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor*, pp. 15–16 and 87.

Political stewardship

An **annual IMEC Summit** of Heads of State and Government, with regular ministerial meetings, would sustain political momentum, provide strategic direction and mobilise coordinated action, as proposed in the MENA2050 Declaration. A G20 or G7 sherpa-track anchoring, discussed in policy circles since 2025,[58] could provide continuity while the corridor's own institutions mature, without substituting for them.

Secretariat and national counterparts

Whatever the option, the secretariat should have a host-country agreement conferring legal personality and capacity to contract, assessed contributions however modest, merit-based technical staff on fixed terms rather than rotating secondments alone, and an explicit mandate to publish an annual implementation report, including on non-compliance. Each participant should designate a national IMEC coordinator with inter-ministerial authority, the domestic counterpart without which an international secretariat has no traction.

Decision-making and variable geometry

Consensus should govern constitutive matters (admission of members, budget, amendments, creation of organs). Work programmes and technical annexes should be adopted by consensus or, failing that, by a qualified majority, with a right for a non-approving member to declare that it is not bound. This device, drawn from the GMS annexes and reflected in the model framework agreement prepared for this policy paper, permits progress segment by segment without fragmenting the corridor.[59]

Financing

An **IMEC Fund**, alongside joint sovereign-fund mechanisms where appropriate, should be built on the Lobito lesson: agreed risk-allocation principles settled once at corridor level, a project preparation facility funding feasibility, environmental and social assessment and transaction advice, and a rule that external financing confers no voting rights in the organs. The participation of Gulf sovereign wealth funds, European and Indian development finance institutions, and the multilateral development banks gives IMEC a potential financing depth that few corridors enjoy, provided there is a counterparty to receive it.

Harmonisation and the digital backbone

The trade-facilitation annex should follow the fixed sequence identified above, starting with a transit guarantee and one-stop border posts at the land crossings and building towards electronic single windows and mutual recognition of electronic transport documents and AEO status. The digital and data annex should combine a modular transfer mechanism on the DEPA model, a government-access discipline inspired by the OECD Declaration, a non-self-judging security exception and UN/CEFACT and MLETR-based electronic documents. These are the measures that the MENA2050 Declaration identifies as the least politically exposed, and the ones that can move first.

Security and resilience as a constituent pillar

A **layered Security and Resilience Framework for IMEC** (Chapter 6), owned by the corridor's institutions and speaking primarily the language of protection, continuity and resilience, should cover the protection of critical physical and digital infrastructure (ports, rail, subsea cables, landing stations, energy interconnectors); maritime security and chokepoint redundancy; early warning, risk monitoring

58 See notably N. Shafer (lead author), *The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor: Connectivity in an Era of Geopolitical Uncertainty*, Atlantic Council, August 2025, which discusses an IMEC coordinating body; and F. Sauvignon and S. Benaglia, *An India-Middle East-Europe Corridor for Peace*, EuroMeSCo Policy Brief No. 136, January 2024, on transforming IMEC into an inclusive forum.

59 MENA2050 IMEC Task Force, *Model Framework Agreement on the Governance of an Economic Corridor*, working draft, 15 July 2026 (prepared for this policy paper), Article 11.

and crisis preparedness supported by information sharing; foreign-investment screening of critical assets; incident notification and mutual assistance for repair; and continuity of operations. It should leave defence commitments to the participants' existing arrangements while ensuring coordination with them, as Article 16 of the model framework agreement provides.[60]

Ownership, participation and communication

An **IMEC Business Council** with formal consultation rights; an **IMEC Civil Society Council** and an **IMEC Parliamentary Conference** to strengthen social ownership and legislative alignment; and an **IMEC brand** with a sustained public communication campaign to generate an "IMEC soft power" dynamic, as proposed by the MENA2050 Declaration. The parliamentary dimension matters more than is often assumed: treaty-based corridors depend on ratification, and ratification depends on legislators who understand the corridor.

Enlargement and inter-corridor governance

An accession clause on the Northern Corridor model, an observer category for corridor-relevant States and international organisations, an associate category for operators and third-country partners, and cooperation agreements with neighbouring corridors (the Middle Corridor, the Iraq Development Road, TEN-T's European Transport Corridors, African and South Asian corridors) on the Northern–Central Corridor model of institutional interoperability without membership.

Dispute settlement, accountability and transparency

Drawing on Mottola's analysis of corridor disputes, IMEC needs a three-tier architecture: interstate settlement of disputes over transit and facilitation commitments (negotiation, then conciliation or arbitration); predictable rules on seat, applicable law and enforcement for investor–State and concession disputes, which corridors have already generated elsewhere; and an accessible grievance and accountability mechanism for affected communities, consistent with the safeguards of the development banks and agencies financing IMEC projects.[61] IMEC instruments should be published and any treaty registered with the UN Secretariat under Article 102 of the UN Charter, to avoid the confidentiality that Mottola identifies as a weakness of many corridor arrangements.[62]

8.7 The twelve clauses of a future IMEC Framework Agreement

Drawing on the comparison and on Mottola's analysis of corridor treaties, a future IMEC instrument would need twelve clauses, for each of which a tested model exists:

#	Clause	Model to draw from
1	Object and geographic scope, with a route annex amendable by the political organ	TEN-T (annexes by delegated act)
2	Legal status and personality: capacity to contract, own, sue, receive funds	NCTTCA; TRACECA Secretariat
3	Organs: Council of Ministers, Executive Committee, Permanent Secretariat, Business Council with consultation rights	Northern Corridor; CAREC carrier federation
4	Decision rules: consensus for constitutive matters; qualified majority with opt-out for annexes	GMS CBTA annexes

60MENA2050 IMEC Task Force, *Model Framework Agreement on the Governance of an Economic Corridor*, working draft, 15 July 2026 (prepared for this policy paper), Article 16; MENA2050, *Institutionalise to Implement: Which governance and security arrangements are best fit to advance the IMEC?*, Concept note, November 2026, Part II.

61M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), paras 50–53.

62M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 35.

#	Clause	Model to draw from
5	Financing: assessed contributions, costed investment framework, blended-finance facility	GMS Regional Investment Framework; Lobito
6	Trade-facilitation annex: transit guarantee, one-stop border posts, harmonised documents, AEO recognition	GMS CBTA
7	Technical standards annex: gauge, axle load, signalling, electrification, transition periods	TEN-T TSIs
8	Digital and data annex: e-documents, transfer mechanism, government-access discipline, non-self-judging exception	DEPA; OECD Declaration (2022); UNCITRAL MLETR
9	Security and resilience clause: asset protection, dual use, investment screening, cyber, incident notification, repair	EU Military Mobility Package; EU Action Plan on Cable Security
10	Performance monitoring: published observatory with mandatory data submission	CAREC CPMM; Northern Corridor Transport Observatory
11	Accession, association, observer status and withdrawal	NCTTA accession article; DEPA modular accession
12	Dispute settlement, accountability and transparency: interstate procedure, investor–State rules, community grievance mechanism, publication and UN registration	TRACECA Art. 12; MDB accountability mechanisms; Art. 102 UN Charter (Mottola, paras 35 and 50–53)

A complete model text structured around these clauses, in multilateral treaty register, has been prepared as a working draft for negotiators and is available from the MENA2050 IMEC Task Force.[63]

8.8 Next step: a preliminary IMEC Governance and Resilience Framework

The proposals of this policy paper can be condensed into a **preliminary IMEC Governance and Resilience Framework**, which could be submitted to the Steering Committee and discussed with operators, financiers and security authorities. It would contain five components:

1. **A small set of agreed design principles** (section 8.1): institutionalise to implement; govern the whole and operate by segments; variable geometry with a common core; openness; multilateral consistency; security and resilience as a constituent pillar; inclusive ownership; complementarity among corridors.
2. **A responsibility matrix** along the implementation chain and the cycle of a disruption (sections 6.8 and 8.5).
3. **A prioritised risk and dependency map** of critical assets, bottlenecks and dependencies (section 6.4), tested through scenarios (section 6.5).
4. **Measurable indicators** of connectivity and resilience (section 6.12), building on the OECD Scoreboard.
5. **Two or three practical pilots**, chosen among those below.

Pilot	Content	Possible partners
IMEC risk and resilience atlas	A shared map of critical assets, flows, dependencies, bottlenecks and alternatives across transport, energy and digital systems; the analytical basis of the risk map and	Steering Committee; OECD/ITF; operators; research institutions

63 MENA2050 IMEC Task Force, *Model Framework Agreement on the Governance of an Economic Corridor*, working draft, 15 July 2026 (prepared for this policy paper).

Pilot	Content	Possible partners
	indicators	
Port and digital-continuity project	Continuity plans, backups and incident-reporting arrangements for a group of gateway ports and their customs and port community systems, building on the IMEC Ports Club	Ports Club; customs and cyber authorities
Multinational crisis simulation	A table-top exercise on one or two of the scenarios of section 6.5, bringing together governments, operators, insurers and security authorities	Signatories and candidate States; operators; insurers
Minimum resilience standards for IMEC projects	A short set of standards (redundancy, cyber, continuity, reporting) as a condition of the IMEC label and of IMEC financing	Steering Committee; Financing and Transport groups; MDBs and DFIs
Inter-corridor redundancy study	Analysis of how adjacent corridors (Middle Corridor, Development Road, TEN-T, Three Seas, East African corridors) can provide alternative routes, and the interoperability needed	Corridor organisations; OECD; UNECE; development banks

9. Conclusion: institutionalise to implement

The comparative record is consistent. Corridors are not made by maps, nor by memoranda alone. They are made by their functional dimension (in Milena Mottola's words, the "laws, policies, and institutions") that turns a set of infrastructures into a corridor.[64] Those that endure possess a policy organ, an executive organ and a permanent secretariat, a prepared pipeline, harmonised procedures, a voice for operators and for civil society, a way to admit newcomers, a route to remedy and, increasingly, a framework for their security and their data. Those that lack them remain in what Mottola calls "disjointed incrementalism", however ambitious their founding declarations.

IMEC's soft beginnings were a reasonable response to a difficult political context. Since 2025, a Steering Committee, working groups, criteria for labelling "IMEC projects" and a Ports Club have begun, informally and on a preliminary basis, to give it a functional dimension, and the OECD has supplied its first evidence base. But three years on, and after the Hormuz stress test, the cost of informality is visible.

The question is no longer only "where should IMEC run?", but "how will IMEC be governed, protected and kept operational?". The governance and the security of IMEC cannot be designed in sequence: the choice of governance instruments determines whether they reach the sovereign domains of critical-infrastructure protection, cybersecurity and defence, and a corridor-wide resilience framework needs an institutional owner. Whichever of the MENA2050 Declaration's hypotheses is retained, an IMEC Organization or an IMEC Alliance, the pathway proposed here, from structured coordination to a Charter and then to a Framework Agreement, would allow IMEC to keep the flexibility it needs while acquiring the continuity, coordination and accountability that implementation demands.

Governance and security also meet in a second way: **security of the IMEC, security through the IMEC**. The corridor must be protected; but by creating shared stakes, habits of cooperation and standing channels of dialogue, it can also become a factor of regional security and stability and, over time, of lasting peace. Interdependence alone will not deliver this. Institutions will.

> *"All in all, the success of economic corridors depends on their ability to evolve into engines of sustainable inclusive development as opposed to enclaves of economic growth."*
>
> — Milena Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law*, para. 55

64 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (2024), para. 2.

Institutionalise to implement

Where connections endure, societies flourish; where arteries are severed, conflict deepens. IMEC builds on a deep historical memory, but it must now move beyond nostalgia and symbolism towards functional integration. Institutions that govern and arrangements that protect are what will turn the corridor from a promise into a lasting reality.

Drawn from the MENA2050 IMEC Declaration (4 February 2026).

Annex A. Corridor profiles

This annex presents the corridors compared in this policy paper, one by one: their governance at a glance, an assessment, and the lesson for IMEC. Key facts are drawn from the comparative matrix prepared for this policy paper (Annex B), status as at November 2026.

A.1 TEN-T / European Transport Corridors

Governance at a glance	
Archetype	Supranational / regulatory
Constitutive instrument	Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 of 13 June 2024, replacing Reg. 1315/2013 — **Binding EU law**, directly applicable; 9 corridors + 2 horizontal priorities (ERTMS, European Maritime Space)
Organs and secretariat	Council + Parliament; Commission (DG MOVE); a European Coordinator per corridor; Corridor Forum. Secretariat: Commission services + TENtec system
Financing	**Yes — the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)**, a line in the EU budget. EU budget (CEF Transport/Energy/Digital), EIB, Member States, InvestEU, Cohesion Fund. Grants at regulated co-financing rates, blending, EIB guarantees. ~€1.7bn for military mobility in CEF 2021–27; ~€17.65bn proposed for 2028–34
Accession	An extension mechanism, not an accession clause. Two routes: **EU accession** (Copenhagen criteria, Chapter 14, full acquis — the most demanding entry price of any corridor); or extension of the corridor maps by amendment of the Regulation's annexes + Transport Community Treaty

TEN-T is the most legally dense corridor regime in existence. Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 defines nine European Transport Corridors and two horizontal priorities, sets binding deadlines (2030, 2040, 2050) and technical standards (ERTMS, 740-metre trains, 22.5-tonne axle loads, standard gauge), and is backed by a budget line (the Connecting Europe Facility) and by infringement proceedings before the Court of Justice. Each corridor has a European Coordinator and a Corridor Forum that includes infrastructure managers and operators. Since 2024 the regime has also integrated military mobility, making it the only corridor in which economic and defence governance are legally fused.

Lesson for IMEC. TEN-T cannot be replicated outside an integration bloc, but three of its techniques can: a route map placed in an annex that the political organ can amend without treaty revision; a named coordinator per corridor with a mandate to report; and the fusion of resilience and dual-use considerations into infrastructure planning. TEN-T is also IMEC's European terminal: interoperability with the European Transport Corridors should be an explicit objective.

A.2 Northern Corridor (East Africa)

Governance at a glance	
Archetype	Treaty-based intergovernmental
Constitutive instrument	NCTTA, 1985, revised 1996 and 2007 — **Binding treaty**, with an explicit accession clause
Organs and secretariat	Council of Ministers (supreme organ); Executive Committee (Permanent Secretaries) +

Governance at a glance	
	specialised committees. Secretariat: NCTTCA Permanent Secretariat, Mombasa
Financing	Member-State contributions to the NCTTCA budget; transit charges collected nationally. Member States; World Bank; TradeMark Africa; EU; GIZ; AfDB. Institutional budget + donor project finance; road funds; transit fees
Accession	**Yes — an explicit, well-drafted clause. The model to copy.** (i) application; (ii) approval by the Council of Ministers; (iii) deposit of the instrument of accession with the Secretariat

Linking the port of Mombasa to Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, the DRC and South Sudan, the Northern Corridor is governed by a transit and transport agreement first concluded in 1985 and revised in 2007, administered by the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority (NCTTCA). Its Council of Ministers decides, an Executive Committee of permanent secretaries prepares, and a permanent secretariat in Mombasa executes. Its Transport Observatory publishes transit times, dwell times, weighbridge stops and non-tariff barriers, and a regional electronic cargo-tracking system links customs administrations. In January 2026 it signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the Central Corridor, the first corridor-to-corridor institutional bridge in Africa. Mottola uses the NCTTA (2007, in force 2012) as a reference text throughout her analysis: it exempts transit traffic from duties (Art. 50), sets principles for a uniform customs transit procedure (Protocol No. 3), provides for joint border posts (Arts 19–20), harmonised technical standards (Art. 14), stakeholder consultation (Art. 8(d)) and an international coordination authority (Art. 6).[65]

Lesson for IMEC. The Northern Corridor shows that a small, permanently funded secretariat, a three-line accession clause and a published observatory can sustain a corridor for four decades across changes of government. Its accession article is the model to copy for IMEC, and its 2026 cooperation agreement is the model for inter-corridor relations.

A.3 Central Corridor (East Africa)

Governance at a glance	
Archetype	Treaty-based intergovernmental
Constitutive instrument	CCTTFA Agreement, Dar es Salaam, 2006 — **Binding treaty** creating an intergovernmental agency
Organs and secretariat	Council of Ministers; executive / technical committees. Secretariat: CCTTFA Secretariat, Dar es Salaam
Financing	Member-State contributions. Member States; TradeMark Africa; World Bank; EU. Coordinated resource mobilisation is a named priority of the 2026 MoC
Accession	Yes — accession to the CCTTFA agreement. Application → Council of Ministers → deposit

Centred on the port of Dar es Salaam and serving Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and the DRC, the Central Corridor is governed by the 2006 CCTTFA agreement establishing an intergovernmental

65 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (April 2024), paras 20, 29, 31, 44 and 45.

agency with a Council of Ministers and a secretariat in Dar es Salaam. It relies on EAC and SADC instruments, one-stop border posts and joint monitoring of non-tariff barriers, and has made digitalisation and data sharing priorities of its 2026 cooperation with the Northern Corridor.

Lesson for IMEC. Two competing corridors serving overlapping hinterlands chose institutional interoperability over rivalry. This is directly relevant to the relationship between IMEC and alternative routes such as the Development Road or the Suez route.

A.4 TRACECA (Europe–Caucasus–Asia)

Governance at a glance	
Archetype	Treaty-based intergovernmental
Constitutive instrument	Basic Multilateral Agreement (MLA), Baku, 8 Sept 1998, + technical annexes — **Binding treaty** — the only Eurasian corridor with a treaty creating both a corridor and a permanent secretariat
Organs and secretariat	Intergovernmental Commission (annual ministerial); national Secretaries; working groups. Secretariat: Permanent Secretariat, Baku
Financing	No standing fund; historically EU technical assistance. European Commission; IFIs project-by-project. Grants for TA, feasibility, legal harmonisation — not capital
Accession	**Yes** — the MLA is open. Application → decision of the Intergovernmental Commission → deposit of the instrument

TRACECA began in 1993 as an EU technical-assistance programme and hardened into a treaty, the Basic Multilateral Agreement signed in Baku in 1998, whose technical annexes cover customs, documentation, road, rail, navigation and dangerous goods. An Intergovernmental Commission meets annually and a permanent secretariat sits in Baku. TRACECA has functioned above all as a legal-transposition machine aligning its members with UNECE conventions, and it now works with UNECE on the mutual recognition of electronic transport documents.

Lesson for IMEC. A programme can become an institution: TRACECA shows how donor-supported technical work can mature into a treaty with a secretariat. Its weakness, a secretariat without autonomous power or investment capacity, is a warning against an IMEC body limited to legal harmonisation.

A.5 International North–South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

Governance at a glance	
Archetype	Treaty-based intergovernmental
Constitutive instrument	Intergovernmental Agreement, St Petersburg, 12 Sept 2000 — **Binding treaty**; mandates harmonisation of transport policy and law, plus "security of travel and safety of goods"

Governance at a glance	
Organs and secretariat	Coordination Council; Expert Groups I and II (technical, customs, tariffs). Secretariat: Hosted by Iran; thin and irregular
Financing	**None** — the central weakness. National budgets; bilateral credits (~$1.6bn Russia–Iran for Rasht–Astara); Indian investment in Chabahar. Sanctions block multilateral and commercial finance
Accession	**Yes** — an accession clause. The applicant deposits an instrument of accession with the Secretariat; the Coordination Council notes it

The INSTC Agreement, signed in St Petersburg in 2000 by India, Iran and Russia and in force since 2002, mandates the harmonisation of transport policy and law and the security of goods in transit. It has received ten accessions. Yet its institutions are thin: a Coordination Council meeting irregularly and a secretariat hosted by Iran. It has no fund, no unified operator and no unified tariff, and sanctions block multilateral and commercial finance and insurance.

Lesson for IMEC. A binding treaty is not enough. Without a functioning secretariat, regular meetings and finance, legal commitments remain largely unimplemented. For India, a party to both, the comparison between the INSTC and IMEC is particularly instructive.

A.6 Middle Corridor / Trans-Caspian International Transport Route

Governance at a glance	
Archetype	Corporate / association-led
Constitutive instrument	International Association "TITR", Astana 2014, formed by rail, port and shipping operators; a superimposed layer of State roadmaps — **Private-law association**, not an IGO. The State layer is declaratory
Organs and secretariat	Ad hoc ministerials; KZ–AZ–GE–TR quadrilateral; EU–Turkmenistan Platform; Association Board. Secretariat: TITR Association Secretariat, Astana
Financing	None; the EU envelope is attached externally. Global Gateway (€10bn pledged for Central Asia / Caucasus transport, Jan 2024; reinforced Samarkand, Apr 2025); EBRD, ADB, AIIB; World Bank ($846m guarantee backing $1.4bn for KTZ, early 2026)
Accession	**Two doors.** (i) Corporate: an operator applies to the General Assembly and becomes a member. (ii) State: through political roadmaps, with no formal instrument

The Middle Corridor is governed from below. The TITR International Association, created in Astana in 2014 by the railways, ports and shipping companies of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Türkiye, has legal personality under Kazakh law and adopts annual work plans. The State layer above it is declaratory: roadmaps, quadrilateral meetings and an EU–Central Asia coordination platform. Financing is attached externally (Global Gateway, EBRD, ADB, World Bank). The binding constraints are the absence of a unified transit regime and of a single operator across the Caspian, and Caspian vessel capacity.

Lesson for IMEC. Operators will govern a corridor if States do not. IMEC should give its operators a

formal seat (a Business Council) rather than leave them to govern informally, and should not skip the transit-guarantee stage on the way to digitalisation, which is the Middle Corridor's current difficulty.

A.7 Lobito Corridor

Governance at a glance	
Archetype	Hybrid: treaty + MoU + concession
Constitutive instrument	(i) LCTTFA Agreement, Angola, Jan 2023 (SADC-facilitated); (ii) seven-party MoU, Global Gateway Forum, Oct 2023 — (i) **binding** regional agreement creating an agency; (ii) **non-binding** political MoU mobilising financiers
Organs and secretariat	LCTTFA ministerial council (3 States); PGII / Global Gateway summits for the partner layer; LCIPA. Secretariat: LCTTFA Secretariat (Angola), operational since July 2025
Financing	No single fund, but **the densest blended-finance stack in the world today**. US DFC ($553m direct loan to Lobito Atlantic Railway); AFC (lead developer); AfDB (>$1bn in 12 months); Team Europe / Global Gateway (>€2bn); EIB; World Bank; USTDA; Italy; ten EU Member States. Explicitly a counter-model to Chinese state lending
Accession	Yes on the treaty layer (LCTTFA); ad hoc on the MoU layer. Corridor States accede to the LCTTFA; partners sign the MoU or a further declaration of intent

Lobito links the Angolan port of Lobito to the DRC and Zambian copper belt. It combines three layers: a binding regional agreement among Angola, the DRC and Zambia (the LCTTFA, 2023) creating an agency whose secretariat became operational in 2025; a non-binding MoU of October 2023 bringing in the United States, the EU and financiers; and a thirty-year rail concession operated by a Trafigura–Mota-Engil–Vecturis consortium. It has assembled the densest blended-finance stack of any corridor (DFC, AFC, AfDB, Team Europe, EIB, World Bank, USTDA), and the World Bank convened a regional coordination meeting in February 2026.

Lesson for IMEC. Lobito is the closest analogue to IMEC: a Western-backed, investment-led corridor launched by MoU. Its lesson is double. Political MoUs can mobilise finance quickly, but the corridor States still needed a treaty and a secretariat, and stacked finance still needed a coordinator. Lobito also illustrates Mottola's caution about extraction routes: local value addition is a condition of political sustainability.

A.8 Trans-Kalahari Corridor and Walvis Bay Corridor Group

Governance at a glance	
Archetype	Corporate / PPP + MoU
Constitutive instrument	TKC MoU (2003) under the SADC Transport Protocol; WBCG (2000), a public–private joint venture — TKC: **non-binding MoU** + standing Management Committee. WBCG: **private-law PPP vehicle**

Governance at a glance	
Organs and secretariat	TKC Management Committee (transport, customs, police); technical working groups. Secretariat: TKC Secretariat, Windhoek; WBCG as an independent PPP entity
Financing	**WBCG is self-funding through its members** — the distinguishing feature. Port authority, TransNamib, hauliers, the three governments; donor support. Membership fees and service revenue — a commercial, not fiscal, logic
Accession	TKC: by MoU amendment. WBCG: membership, not accession — a company or authority simply joins

The Trans-Kalahari Corridor links Walvis Bay in Namibia to Botswana and South Africa under a non-binding 2003 MoU with a standing management committee and secretariat in Windhoek. The Walvis Bay Corridor Group, a public–private vehicle created in 2000 that brings together the port authority, rail, hauliers and government, markets the corridor as a commercial product, funds itself through membership fees and services, and publishes transit-time indicators.

Lesson for IMEC. A corridor can be run as a service with a commercial logic. An IMEC Business Council could take on some of these functions (marketing, performance data, customer interface), which would also support the IMEC brand proposed by the MENA2050 Declaration.

A.9 Abidjan–Lagos Corridor

Governance at a glance	
Archetype	Treaty-based within a regional community
Constitutive instrument	ALCO (2002); Treaty on the Abidjan–Lagos Corridor Highway, Heads of State, March 2014 — Mixed: an established IGO plus a project treaty
Organs and secretariat	ECOWAS Heads of State; ALCO General Assembly + Executive Secretariat; national corridor committees. Secretariat: ALCO Secretariat
Financing	None. ECOWAS; AfDB (lead financier of the highway); EU; World Bank. Sovereign lending; PPP structuring
Accession	ECOWAS membership is the gateway. Corridor instruments open to ECOWAS members; the 2014 highway treaty is closed to its five signatories

Linking five coastal ECOWAS States, the Abidjan–Lagos Corridor rests on the ECOWAS acquis (trade liberalisation, free movement, inter-State road transit), an Abidjan–Lagos Corridor Organization (2002) and the Treaty on the Establishment of the Abidjan–Lagos Corridor (2013), which entrusts the construction, management and operation of the highway to a dedicated supranational agency, with the African Development Bank as lead financier. Its operative problem is not infrastructure but rent-extraction: checkpoints and informal payments, measured in illegal roadblocks per hundred kilometres. Its corridor management authority remains incomplete.

Lesson for IMEC. Governance must address behaviour at borders as much as investment. Published

monitoring of informal costs and dwell times is a reform instrument in its own right.

A.10 Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) corridors

Governance at a glance	
Archetype	Bank-hosted programmatic + treaty
Constitutive instrument	Programme launched 1992 with ADB; legal core = the Cross-Border Transport Facilitation Agreement (CBTA), 1999–2003 — **CBTA is a binding treaty** (17 annexes, 3 protocols); the surrounding programme is non-binding
Organs and secretariat	Summit (triennial) + Ministerial Conference (annual); sector forums; National Transport Facilitation Committees. Secretariat: GMS Secretariat hosted inside the ADB
Financing	No fund, but a structured pipeline: the Regional Investment Framework. ADB (anchor), World Bank, JICA, AFD, China. ADB loans and grants; the RIF is a prioritised costed list — a quasi-fund without a treasury
Accession	The programme is closed at six; the **CBTA is not**. The CBTA contains accession provisions

The GMS programme, launched in 1992 with the Asian Development Bank, links Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam through economic corridors governed by triennial summits, annual ministerials and sector forums, with a secretariat hosted by the ADB. Its legal core is the Cross-Border Transport Facilitation Agreement (CBTA), ratified by all six, with seventeen annexes and three protocols covering single-stop inspection, transit, vehicle admission, dangerous goods and multimodal carriers. A Regional Investment Framework prioritises a costed pipeline.

Lesson for IMEC. The CBTA is the best drafting precedent for an IMEC trade-facilitation annex, and its annex-and-protocol structure allows technical commitments to be negotiated and adopted progressively. The GMS also shows how a prioritised, costed pipeline can act as a quasi-fund.

A.11 CAREC corridors (Central Asia)

Governance at a glance	
Archetype	Bank-hosted programmatic
Constitutive instrument	ADB-hosted programme (1997/2001); six corridors; CAREC 2030 — **Non-binding programmatic framework.** Exception: the CAREC Institute, created by intergovernmental agreement (2015, in force 2017)
Organs and secretariat	Ministerial Conference (annual); Senior Officials' Meeting; Customs Cooperation Committee. Secretariat: **ADB is the Secretariat**; CAREC Institute (Urumqi)
Financing	No fund; **the ADB pipeline is the fund**. ADB, World Bank, EBRD, IsDB, IMF, UNDP. Sovereign loans, TA, results-based lending
Accession	Yes, by decision of the Ministerial Conference. A State applies; the Conference admits by

Governance at a glance	
	consensus; no ratification, since there is no treaty

CAREC brings together eleven countries in a programme hosted by the ADB, which acts as secretariat and anchor financier, with an annual ministerial conference, senior officials' meetings and a customs cooperation committee. It has no constitutive treaty, except for the CAREC Institute established by intergovernmental agreement. Its Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring methodology is the benchmark that other corridors have borrowed, and its accession procedure (Georgia in 2016) is the simplest of any credible corridor.

Lesson for IMEC. An MDB host provides technical quality and finance from day one, at the cost of ownership. For IMEC, a hosted secretariat is a plausible intermediate step, provided ownership remains with the members and a transition to an autonomous institution is foreseen. CAREC's monitoring methodology should be adopted from the start.

A.12 Belt and Road Initiative / China–Pakistan Economic Corridor

Governance at a glance	
Archetype	Political-declaratory, bilateral
Constitutive instrument	2013 speeches; "Vision and Actions" (2015); a web of bilateral MoUs; Belt & Road Forums 2017/2019/2023 — **Non-binding.** No constitutive treaty
Organs and secretariat	Belt & Road Forum (a summit, not an organ); China's Leading Group for the BRI; CPEC Joint Cooperation Committee + Pakistani CPEC Authority. Secretariat: None internationally
Financing	**No multilateral fund** — a portfolio of policy-bank lending. China Development Bank, Exim Bank, Silk Road Fund, AIIB, SOE balance sheets. Sovereign-guaranteed loans, EPC+F, resource-backed lending, concessions
Accession	**Signature of a bilateral MoU** — that is the entire procedure. No ratification, no instrument, no clause

The BRI has no constitutive treaty and no international secretariat: it consists of a web of bilateral MoUs, periodic Belt and Road Forums and a domestic leading group in China. CPEC is governed by a bilateral Joint Cooperation Committee and, on the Pakistani side, by a statutory CPEC Authority (2020). Finance comes from Chinese policy banks and state-owned enterprises, which also often build and operate the assets. Security is the host State's responsibility, through a dedicated army division.

Lesson for IMEC. The bilateral hub-and-spoke model is fast but asymmetric, and it leaves security and debt risk with host States. IMEC, as a plurilateral and co-founded corridor, needs the opposite: multilateral rules, transparent finance and shared responsibility for resilience.

A.13 Maputo Development Corridor and Dar es Salaam Corridor: institutional PPPs

Mottola situates the transformation of transport corridors into economic corridors in Africa in the "African Development Corridors" initiative launched by President Nelson Mandela in post-apartheid South Africa, the Maputo Development Corridor between South Africa and Mozambique being the emblematic case, built around a toll-road concession and a coordination agreement between the two governments. The Dar es Salaam Corridor Committee illustrates a distinct institutional form: an institutional public–private partnership whose main public parties are the governments of two or more countries, with national committees designated for implementation (Constitution of 2003, amended 2008).[66]

Lesson for IMEC. Institutional PPPs show that governments and operators can share the governance of a corridor in a single body. For IMEC, this supports giving the Business Council real weight and, at segment level, considering joint public–private committees, while keeping strategic decisions with governments.

A.14 Historical reference: the Rhine, the Danube and Suez

Governance at a glance	
Archetype	Treaty-based commission; national authority

The Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (1815; Mannheim Convention, 1868) is the oldest international organisation still operating: it guarantees freedom of navigation, adopts technical regulations and has its own dispute chain. The Danube Commission (Belgrade Convention, 1948) applies a similar model to a politically more divided river. The Suez Canal combines an international guarantee of free passage (Constantinople Convention, 1888) with operation by a national authority (Suez Canal Authority).

Lesson for IMEC. The separation between the guarantee of passage (treaty), the regulation of the route (a commission with technical competence) and its operation (authorities and operators) remains the most durable architecture known. It can inspire IMEC's distinction between a Framework Agreement, an IMEC Organization and segment operators.

66 M. Mottola, 'Economic Corridors', *MPEPIL* (April 2024), paras 8, 42 and 44.

Annex B. Comparative matrices

The seven matrices below set out, corridor by corridor, the comparative data on which Parts II and III are based. They are reproduced from the analytical matrix prepared for this policy paper (status as at 15 July 2026), with updates where the facts were re-verified in November 2026. The IMEC row is highlighted. Fast-moving files (IMEC's status, Lobito's financing timetable, the ASEAN DEFA signature, the EU Military Mobility Regulation, the announced Kazakhstan–Azerbaijan agreement on the Middle Corridor) should be re-verified before being cited in a formal instrument.

Matrix A. Genesis and constitutive instrument

Corridor	Founding act	Legal nature	Entry into force
TEN-T / European Transport Corridors	Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 of 13 June 2024, replacing Reg. 1315/2013	**Binding EU law**, directly applicable; 9 corridors + 2 horizontal priorities (ERTMS, European Maritime Space)	In force July 2024; enforceable before the CJEU; deadlines 2030 / 2040 / 2050
BRI / CPEC	2013 speeches; "Vision and Actions" (2015); a web of bilateral MoUs; Belt & Road Forums 2017/2019/2023	**Non-binding.** No constitutive treaty	Not registered as treaties. Italy let its MoU lapse in Dec 2023 — the format is reversible
Middle Corridor / TITR	International Association "TITR", Astana 2014, formed by rail, port and shipping operators; a superimposed layer of State roadmaps	**Private-law association**, not an IGO. The State layer is declaratory	Association has legal personality under Kazakh law; the political layer has none. EU–Turkmenistan Coordination Platform, Ashgabat, Oct 2024
INSTC (North–South)	Intergovernmental Agreement, St Petersburg, 12 Sept 2000	**Binding treaty**; mandates harmonisation of transport policy and law, plus "security of travel and safety of goods"	**In force 16 May 2002**
TRACECA	Basic Multilateral Agreement (MLA), Baku, 8 Sept 1998, + technical annexes	**Binding treaty** — the only Eurasian corridor with a treaty creating both a corridor and a permanent secretariat	In force 2000. Began as an EU programme that hardened into treaty law
IMEC	Memorandum of Understanding, G20 New Delhi, 9 Sept 2023	**Explicitly non-binding.** No treaty, no secretariat, no tariff architecture, no dispute settlement	No entry into force. Operationalisation attempted bilaterally — notably the India–UAE Framework Agreement, 13 Feb 2024
Lobito Trans-Africa Corridor	(i) LCTTFA Agreement, Angola, Jan 2023 (SADC-facilitated); (ii) seven-party MoU, Global Gateway Forum, Oct 2023	(i) **binding** regional agreement creating an agency; (ii) **non-binding** political MoU mobilising financiers	LCTTFA Secretariat operationalised July 2025; inaugural regional coordination meeting with the World Bank, 3–6 Feb 2026
Northern Corridor	NCTTA, 1985, revised 1996 and 2007	**Binding treaty**, with an explicit accession clause	In force; NCTTCA Secretariat, Mombasa
Central Corridor	CCTTFA Agreement, Dar es Salaam, 2006	**Binding treaty** creating an intergovernmental agency	In force. MoC with the Northern Corridor signed Mombasa, 21 Jan 2026 — first corridor-to-corridor bridge in Africa
Trans-Kalahari / Walvis Bay	TKC MoU (2003) under the SADC Transport Protocol; WBCG (2000), a public–private joint venture	TKC: **non-binding MoU** + standing Management Committee. WBCG: **private-law PPP vehicle**	TKC Secretariat, Windhoek. WBCG is the reference model for a commercially-run corridor without a treaty
Abidjan–Lagos	ALCO (2002); Treaty on the Establishment of the Abidjan–Lagos Corridor, signed 28 February 2013	Mixed: an established IGO plus a project treaty	Anchored in ECOWAS law (free movement, ETLS). The corridor management authority remains incomplete

Corridor	Founding act	Legal nature	Entry into force
GMS corridors	Programme launched 1992 with ADB; legal core = the Cross-Border Transport Facilitation Agreement (CBTA), 1999–2003	**CBTA is a binding treaty** (17 annexes, 3 protocols); the surrounding programme is non-binding	CBTA ratified by all six; "early harvest" at designated border pairs
CAREC corridors	ADB-hosted programme (1997/2001); six corridors; CAREC 2030	**Non-binding programmatic framework.** Exception: the CAREC Institute, created by intergovernmental agreement (2015, in force 2017)	No treaty establishing the corridors; ADB acts as secretariat

Matrix B. Governance architecture

Corridor	Political / executive organs	Secretariat	Business channel	Decision rule
TEN-T	Council + Parliament; Commission (DG MOVE); a European Coordinator per corridor; Corridor Forum	Commission services + TENtec system	Corridor Fora include infrastructure managers, terminals, rail undertakings	QMV legislation; corridor work plans; implementing acts. **Enforceable**
BRI / CPEC	Belt & Road Forum (a summit, not an organ); China's Leading Group for the BRI; CPEC Joint Cooperation Committee + Pakistani CPEC Authority	None internationally	Chinese SOEs are the de facto governance	Bilateral consensus with structural asymmetry. No multilateral rule exists
TITR	Ad hoc ministerials; KZ–AZ–GE–TR quadrilateral; EU–Turkmenistan Platform; Association Board	TITR Association Secretariat, Astana	The Association is the business channel: KTZ, ADY, Georgian Railway, TCDD, ports, forwarders	General Assembly approves the annual work plan (2026 plan adopted Astana, 24 Apr 2026). States coordinate outside it
INSTC	Coordination Council; Expert Groups I and II (technical, customs, tariffs)	Hosted by Iran; thin and irregular	Freight-forwarder federations (FFFAI ran the dry runs)	Consensus. Meetings have been infrequent
TRACECA	Intergovernmental Commission (annual ministerial); national Secretaries; working groups	Permanent Secretariat, Baku	Consulted; no formal chamber	IGC consensus; the Secretariat has no autonomous power
IMEC	Ministerial meetings foreseen (none held as of October 2026); Steering Committee of Special Envoys/Sherpas established in 2025 (Delhi, Brussels, Trieste, Marseille); five working groups co-chaired by two signatories (strategy, coordination and studies; transport; energy; digital; financing), not all functioning; criteria for labelling "IMEC projects" (June 2026); all informal and preliminary	**None**: the single most-cited institutional deficiency; a Strategy, Coordination and Studies WG supports the Steering Committee	IMEC Ports Club, private-sector led, launched October 2026; otherwise informal: DP World, Adani, CMA CGM, cable and energy consortia	**No published decision rule.** Extension decided by the eight signatory governments. No public information on mandates or outputs
Lobito	LCTTFA ministerial council (3 States); PGII / Global Gateway summits for the partner layer; LCIPA	LCTTFA Secretariat (Angola), operational since July 2025	LCIPA; the concessionaires (Trafigura / Mota-Engil / Vecturis); AFC as lead developer	LCTTFA by consensus; the financier layer coordinated by the World Bank since Feb 2026
Northern Corridor	Council of Ministers (supreme organ); Executive Committee (Permanent Secretaries) + specialised	NCTTCA Permanent Secretariat, Mombasa	Shippers' councils, transporters' associations, port users	Council decides; ExCom sets principles; Secretariat executes

Corridor	Political / executive organs	Secretariat	Business channel	Decision rule
	committees			
Central Corridor	Council of Ministers; executive / technical committees	CCTTFA Secretariat, Dar es Salaam	Transport operators, port stakeholders	Consensus. Under the Jan 2026 MoC: a steering committee of the two Executive Secretaries + a joint technical committee
TKC / WBCG	TKC Management Committee (transport, customs, police); technical working groups	TKC Secretariat, Windhoek; WBCG as an independent PPP entity	**WBCG is the model**: port authority, rail, hauliers and government in one vehicle	TKC consensus; WBCG governed as a company
Abidjan–Lagos	ECOWAS Heads of State; ALCO General Assembly + Executive Secretariat; national corridor committees	ALCO Secretariat	Transporters' unions; informal cross-border traders (a real constituency here)	ECOWAS instruments; ALCO by consensus
GMS	Summit (triennial) + Ministerial Conference (annual); sector forums; National Transport Facilitation Committees	GMS Secretariat hosted inside the ADB	GMS Business Council; provincial governors' forum	Consensus; the Regional Investment Framework prioritises the pipeline
CAREC	Ministerial Conference (annual); Senior Officials' Meeting; Customs Cooperation Committee	**ADB is the Secretariat**; CAREC Institute (Urumqi)	CAREC Federation of Carrier and Forwarder Associations — a genuine private-sector organ	Consensus; ADB drafts and finances

Matrix C. Financing and financial instruments

Corridor	Dedicated fund?	Principal financiers & instruments	Asset model
TEN-T	**Yes — the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)**, a line in the EU budget	EU budget (CEF Transport/Energy/Digital), EIB, Member States, InvestEU, Cohesion Fund. Grants at regulated co-financing rates, blending, EIB guarantees. ~€1.7bn for military mobility in CEF 2021–27; ~€17.65bn proposed for 2028–34	Public infrastructure managers; regulated open access
BRI / CPEC	**No multilateral fund** — a portfolio of policy-bank lending	China Development Bank, Exim Bank, Silk Road Fund, AIIB, SOE balance sheets. Sovereign-guaranteed loans, EPC+F, resource-backed lending, concessions	Chinese SOE construction and often operation; host-State sovereign liability
TITR	None; the EU envelope is attached externally	Global Gateway (€10bn pledged for Central Asia / Caucasus transport, Jan 2024; reinforced Samarkand, Apr 2025); EBRD, ADB, AIIB; World Bank ($846m guarantee backing $1.4bn for KTZ, early 2026)	State railways and ports; the Association coordinates but owns nothing
INSTC	**None** — the central weakness	National budgets; bilateral credits (~$1.6bn Russia–Iran for Rasht–Astara); Indian investment in Chabahar. Sanctions block multilateral and commercial finance	State railways and ports; no unified operator, no unified tariff
TRACECA	No standing fund; historically EU technical assistance	European Commission; IFIs project-by-project. Grants for TA,	Investment happens nationally; TRACECA supplies the legal

Corridor	Dedicated fund?	Principal financiers & instruments	Asset model
		feasibility, legal harmonisation — not capital	framework
IMEC	**None.** ~US$5bn estimated merely to make the transport corridor minimally operational (Gulf ports → Haifa)	Nominally PGII and Global Gateway; in practice sovereign wealth funds and corporate balance sheets. IMEC maps onto neither PGII nor the DFC nor any other US mechanism	Bilateral and corporate: Adani (Haifa, Vadhavan), DP World, CMA CGM; Gulf rail advancing independently
Lobito	No single fund, but **the densest blended-finance stack in the world today**	US DFC ($553m direct loan to Lobito Atlantic Railway); AFC (lead developer); AfDB (>$1bn in 12 months); Team Europe / Global Gateway (>€2bn); EIB; World Bank; USTDA; Italy; ten EU Member States. Explicitly a counter-model to Chinese state lending	30-year concession on the Angolan brownfield line (Trafigura / Mota-Engil / Vecturis); AFC-led concessions for the ~800 km greenfield Zambia–Lobito line (~€4bn; financial close targeted 2027)
Northern Corridor	Member-State contributions to the NCTTCA budget; transit charges collected nationally	Member States; World Bank; TradeMark Africa; EU; GIZ; AfDB. Institutional budget + donor project finance; road funds; transit fees	Public ports and roads; SGR concessions
Central Corridor	Member-State contributions	Member States; TradeMark Africa; World Bank; EU. Coordinated resource mobilisation is a named priority of the 2026 MoC	Port of Dar es Salaam; TAZARA and the SGR programme
TKC / WBCG	**WBCG is self-funding through its members** — the distinguishing feature	Port authority, TransNamib, hauliers, the three governments; donor support. Membership fees and service revenue — a commercial, not fiscal, logic	Walvis Bay + road corridor; the WBCG markets the corridor as a product
Abidjan–Lagos	None	ECOWAS; AfDB (lead financier of the highway); EU; World Bank. Sovereign lending; PPP structuring	Toll-road PPP envisaged
GMS	No fund, but a structured pipeline: the Regional Investment Framework	ADB (anchor), World Bank, JICA, AFD, China. ADB loans and grants; the RIF is a prioritised costed list — a quasi-fund without a treasury	National agencies build; the CBTA governs cross-border operation
CAREC	No fund; **the ADB pipeline is the fund**	ADB, World Bank, EBRD, IsDB, IMF, UNDP. Sovereign loans, TA, results-based lending	National ownership; CAREC supplies planning and standards

Matrix D. Harmonisation of flows, customs, procedures and standards

Corridor	Facilitation & customs / transit	Technical standards	Digital / paperless & monitoring
TEN-T	The acquis itself: Union transit + Common Transit Convention; no internal customs at all	**The deepest technical harmonisation in existence**: ERTMS, 740 m trains, 22.5 t axle load, 1435 mm gauge, TSIs, alternative fuels every 60 km on the core network	eFTI Regulation; NCTS; EU Form 302 being digitalised for military transport. Statutory reporting; TENtec; infringement proceedings
BRI / CPEC	Bilateral customs agreements; Single Window pilots; no corridor transit regime; TIR (China acceded 2016); bilateral AEO	China exports its own standards — rail, telecom, payments, BeiDou. Standards diplomacy is an instrument	Digital Silk Road; "smart port" systems. No multilateral monitoring

Corridor	Facilitation & customs / transit	Technical standards	Digital / paperless & monitoring
	recognition		
TITR	**The weak point.** No unified transit regime across the Caspian; TIR carnets. Absence of a unified tariff and single operator is the diagnosed core bottleneck	Break-of-gauge (1520/1435) at both ends; the Caspian Ro-Ro / container **vessel shortage is the binding physical constraint — not track**	The **2026 work plan makes digitalisation the priority**: e-documents with digital signatures and direct customs-to-customs data exchange. Feb 2026 protocol (AZ, TM, UZ, GE) on freight digitalisation; Kazakhstan invites the EU into its e-permit exchange
INSTC	The 2000 IGA mandates legal harmonisation — largely unimplemented. TIR; bilateral arrangements. No common transit regime; sanctions distort every financial and insurance flow	Break-of-gauge; the missing Rasht–Astara link	Nascent; unified visa and banking interoperability discussed, never instrumented. Dry runs (2014) gave a baseline (~$2,500 saved per 15 t); no continuous monitoring
TRACECA	**The MLA's technical annexes are the harmonisation instrument** — customs and documentation, road, rail, navigation, dangerous goods; alignment with UNECE conventions	UNECE / OTIF alignment. TRACECA has functioned as a legal-transposition machine	With UNECE: multimodal digital transport corridors on UN/CEFACT standards — mutual recognition of electronic transport documents (Astana seminar, May 2026)
IMEC	**None.** No unified tariff, no customs annex, no binding implementation mechanism. Everything is bilateral (India–UAE Framework Agreement covers two parties)	Rail gauge, signalling and port-interface standards unaddressed; Haifa capacity is a hard bottleneck	The digital pillar exists in the MoU with no legal architecture. India's DPI is proposed as "the rails"; the trust layer is missing. First corridor monitoring baseline: OECD Corridors' Connectivity Scoreboard (November 2026)
Lobito	**The LCTTFA agreement** — explicitly aimed at harmonising customs, border management and trade facilitation across three highly divergent legal systems; one-stop border posts; SADC transit instruments	Gauge is uniform (Cape, 1067 mm) — a rare advantage. The problem is condition: DRC sections run at 10–15 km/h at under 5% of capacity	€6m EU support via TradeMark Africa for customs simplification. The Feb 2026 World Bank architecture is meant to supply the missing monitoring layer
Northern Corridor	NCTTA + RCTG-Carnet; EAC Single Customs Territory; OSBPs (Malaba, Busia)	Harmonised axle loads, vehicle dimensions, road-user charges	Regional Electronic Cargo Tracking System, interoperable KE/UG/RW; e-single windows. **The best corridor dashboard in Africa** — the Transport Observatory publishes transit and dwell times, weighbridge stops, NTB counts
Central Corridor	CCTTFA agreement; RCTG-Carnet; EAC / SADC instruments; OSBPs (Rusumo, Kabanga); NTB monitoring	Harmonised road standards; multimodal (rail, lake, road)	Digitalisation and data sharing are named priorities of the Jan 2026 MoC; joint NTB monitoring
TKC / WBCG	TKC MoU + SADC Transport Protocol; single administrative document; the Trans-Kalahari OSBP (Mamuno) is a SADC showcase	SADC harmonised axle loads	WBCG cargo tracking and information services. Commercial KPIs — transit time marketed as a product
Abidjan–Lagos	**ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS)**; free-movement protocols; ECOWAS Inter-State Road Transit; joint border posts (Noépé, Seme-Krake)	ECOWAS axle-load regulation (a notorious compliance problem)	Nascent. **The operative metric is the number of illegal roadblocks per 100 km** — a corridor whose bottleneck is rent-extraction, not infrastructure
GMS	**The CBTA — the most complete corridor facilitation treaty in the developing world**: 17 annexes, 3 protocols (single-stop inspection, movement of persons, transit, vehicle admission,	Harmonised vehicle standards, axle loads, signage under the annexes	Customs single-window pilots; ASEAN Single Window overlaps for the four ASEAN members. National Transport Facilitation Committees

Corridor	Facilitation & customs / transit	Technical standards	Digital / paperless & monitoring
	dangerous goods, multimodal carriers)		
CAREC	Transport & Trade Facilitation Strategy; Customs Cooperation Committee; joint customs control; risk management; AEO development; TIR	Road and rail standards via ADB technical assistance	E-single windows. **CPMM (Corridor Performance Measurement and Monitoring)** — the methodological benchmark other corridors have borrowed

Matrix E. Safety, security and defence

Corridor	Asset & chokepoint protection	Defence & dual-use dimension	Cyber / hybrid
TEN-T	CER Directive; European Maritime Space; EMSA; EUNAVFOR Atalanta and Aspides (Red Sea, since Feb 2024) protecting the sea legs of European trade	**The only corridor where economic and defence governance are legally fused.** Reg. 2024/1679 recognises military mobility; the Council adopted four priority military-mobility corridors (17 Mar 2025) with ~500 dual-use "hotspot" projects; the Military Mobility Package (19 Nov 2025) proposes a binding Regulation — movement permissions in three working days, National Coordinators, a solidarity pool, a digitalised EU Form 302, foreign-ownership screening	NIS2; EU Action Plan on Cable Security (Feb 2025); Cable Security Toolbox + €347m package (Feb 2026); Hybrid Toolbox and Rapid Response Teams; shadow-fleet sanctions; EU–NATO Structured Dialogue
BRI / CPEC	**The reference case of militarised corridor protection**: Pakistan raised a Special Security Division (~15,000 troops plus paramilitary) to protect Chinese personnel; attacks in Balochistan continue. Djibouti base; port access (Gwadar, Hambantota)	China exports no collective defence framework. Security outsourced to the host State, supplemented by Chinese private security companies — a growing legal grey zone	Digital Silk Road dependencies; the host State carries the risk
TITR	National services; no joint force. The 2018 Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea **prohibits the presence of non-littoral armed forces** — a decisive constraint on any external security role	The corridor's value is its distance from the Russian and Iranian routes. Armenia's inclusion and the US-brokered TRIPP route (Implementation Framework signed with the US, Jan 2026) are the live variables	**A leading indicator**: EU and US concern over potential Chinese operational access to cargo data at Anaklia — corridor data as a sovereignty question
INSTC	National forces; sanctioned and volatile space. Hormuz exposure at the southern end; Chabahar is deliberately outside the Strait	The corridor exists partly as a sanctions-and-chokepoint hedge for Russia, Iran and India	Financial-messaging and insurance interoperability under sanctions is the binding constraint
TRACECA	The MLA's annexes cover safety and dangerous goods, not security	None	None
IMEC	**Undefined.** The MoU contains no security architecture. **The fatal exposure**: the eastern leg was routed through the Strait of Hormuz, while Oman — whose Duqm and Salalah ports bypass the Strait — was left off the signatory list. The crisis in and	None. No joint patrol, no protection of the rail or cable legs. The northern land leg still depends on Saudi–Israeli normalisation, which has not occurred	None at corridor level

Corridor	Asset & chokepoint protection	Defence & dual-use dimension	Cyber / hybrid
	around the Strait of Hormuz since February 2026 tested that directly		
Lobito	National forces; the eastern DRC conflict is the principal risk to the DRC branch. Gulf of Guinea: the Yaoundé Architecture (2013 Code of Conduct; ICC Yaoundé; CRESMAC / CRESMAO)	None formalised. US and EU interest is strategic (critical raw materials), not military	Growing concern over who holds mineral-traceability and logistics data
Northern Corridor	NCTTA covers transport safety, road safety, cargo security. Djibouti Code of Conduct / Jeddah Amendment (2017); EUNAVFOR Atalanta	None	Electronic cargo tracking is itself a security instrument (anti-diversion)
Central Corridor	National forces; road safety a named MoC priority. Same Western Indian Ocean regime	None	The 2026 MoC's data-sharing commitments raise the first data-governance questions for these corridors
TKC / WBCG	TKC MoU covers police and customs cooperation. Walvis Bay (Atlantic) — low threat	None	Minimal
Abidjan–Lagos	**Security is the corridor's core operational problem**: checkpoints, extortion, and jihadist pressure on the northern feeder routes. Gulf of Guinea piracy — the Yaoundé Architecture is the applicable regime	ECOWAS Standby Force; no corridor-specific structure	Minimal
GMS	National forces; the Myanmar war has severed segments. Malacca Strait Patrols (ID, MY, SG, TH) and ReCAAP — a treaty with an Information Sharing Centre in Singapore	None at GMS level	Nascent
CAREC	National forces; Afghanistan is the structural unknown. Landlocked — dependent on others' chokepoints, which is precisely the argument for the corridor	None	Cross-border customs data exchange

Matrix F.1. Digital corridors: four data-regime families

Regime family	Logic	Transfer mechanism	Where
Rights-based / adequacy	Data may leave only if protection is essentially equivalent	GDPR Ch. V: adequacy, SCCs, BCRs	EU / EEA + ~15 adequacy partners; the EU–US Data Privacy Framework (structurally fragile)
Trade-based / open-with-exceptions	Free flow is the default; restrictions must be justified	CPTPP Art. 14.11 / 14.13; DEPA; USMCA	Singapore, NZ, Chile, Korea, Japan, Canada
Sovereignty / conditional export	Export is an exception requiring State authorisation	PIPL + CAC security assessment, standard contracts, FTZ negative lists	China

Regime family	Logic	Transfer mechanism	Where
Sovereignty / blacklist	Free flow except to designated States; localisation by category	India's DPDP Act 2023; RBI payment-data localisation	India, Indonesia, Viet Nam (varying)

Matrix F.2. Digital corridors: comparative governance of data flows

Corridor / regime	Legal basis for cross-border data flow	Digital-sovereignty safeguards	Institutional venue
EU digital corridors	GDPR Ch. V; Data Act; Data Governance Act; NIS2. Physical layer: Cable Projects of European Interest; EU-funded subsea cables (Medusa, EllaLink, Far North Fiber)	**The most explicit sovereignty architecture in existence**: adequacy conditionality, Data Act third-country access safeguards, foreign-ownership screening of cable and grid assets, exclusion of "non-trusted third-country players"	Commission (CNECT, HOME); ENISA; Submarine Cable Infrastructure Expert Group (Rec. (EU) 2024/779); EDPB
IMEC digital pillar	**None.** The MoU mentions data connectivity; nothing governs transfers. Physical layer: Blue-Raman (Google, Sparkle, Omantel), routed to bypass the Egypt / Suez chokepoint	Each State applies its own — EU adequacy vs India's DPDP negative list vs Gulf localisation vs Israeli adequacy	**None.** Every serious analysis identifies this gap
BRI / Digital Silk Road	China's Global Data Security Initiative (2020) — a declaratory counter-model; bilateral digital MoUs. Physical layer: PEACE cable; CPEC fibre; Chinese data centres, smart cities, BeiDou	Chinese law travels with the infrastructure (PIPL, DSL, CSL, CAC export control). For the host State, sovereignty is transferred, not preserved	None multilateral
TITR digital layer	UN/CEFACT standards; mutual recognition of electronic transport documents is the operative instrument being built with UNECE and TRACECA. Physical layer: Digital Silk Way trans-Caspian fibre	**The live test case**: Western concern over Chinese access to cargo data at Anaklia treats logistics data as a sovereignty asset	TITR General Assembly; UNECE; the EU–Turkmenistan Platform
ASEAN / GMS	**ASEAN DEFA** — "substantial conclusion" reached Kuala Lumpur, Oct 2025; signature expected end-2026. Would be the world's first region-wide agreement devoted exclusively to digital economy governance	Wide internal divergence — SG, MY, TH, PH broadly DFFT-aligned; ID and VN restrictive; KH, LA, MM without frameworks. ASEAN Model Contractual Clauses and Framework on Personal Data Protection bridge	ASEAN Digital Ministers' Meeting
Plurilateral digital-trade regimes (route-agnostic)	**DEPA** (Singapore–Chile–NZ, 2020; **modular** — a State may accede to individual modules; Korea acceded; China and Canada have applied); CPTPP Ch. 14; RCEP Ch. 12 (whose self-judging security exception substantially hollows it out)	Public-policy and security exceptions; the RCEP exception is the widest and the least justiciable	DEPA Joint Committee; CPTPP Commission
Trust-building venues	**DFFT** (Japan, Davos 2019; endorsed at G20 Osaka), operationalised through the Institutional Arrangement for Partnership (IAP), hosted at the OECD with a permanent secretariat. The **OECD Declaration on Government Access to Personal Data** (Dec 2022) is the first instrument disciplining State access. Global CBPR Forum (2022) for certification-based interoperability	These do not create flows; they create the **trust conditions** under which corridor States can recognise each other's regimes	OECD Digital Policy Committee; Working Party on Data Governance and Privacy; DFFT Expert Community

Corridor / regime	Legal basis for cross-border data flow	Digital-sovereignty safeguards	Institutional venue
African corridors	**AfCFTA Protocol on Digital Trade** (adopted Feb 2024) — the continental basis, not yet operational; AU Malabo Convention (in force June 2023); AU Data Policy Framework (2022)	Thin Malabo ratification; under-resourced data-protection authorities. The real risk is that mineral-traceability and logistics data sit offshore with concessionaires	AU Commission; AfCFTA Secretariat; regional economic communities
Subsea cables (cross-cutting)	**UNCLOS Arts. 112–115** (freedom to lay; duty to criminalise wilful damage) — drafted in 1982 and manifestly inadequate to hybrid threats. Attribution in international waters is the unsolved legal problem. ~600 cables carry over 99% of intercontinental data	EU: Rec. 2024/779; Action Plan on Cable Security; an EU Cable Vessels Reserve Fleet; €347m package (Feb 2026); ownership restrictions. NATO: Critical Undersea Infrastructure Coordination Cell; Maritime Centre; Operation Baltic Sentry (14 Jan 2025)	ITU–ICPC Advisory Body on Submarine Cable Resilience (co-chaired Portugal & Nigeria); UN OEWG on ICTs; the IMO

Matrix G. Accession, enlargement and integration of new States

Corridor	Clause & procedure	Conditionality	Recent / pending
TEN-T	An extension mechanism, not an accession clause. Two routes: **EU accession** (Copenhagen criteria, Chapter 14, full acquis — the most demanding entry price of any corridor); or extension of the corridor maps by amendment of the Regulation's annexes + Transport Community Treaty	Total: the entire transport, customs, competition, environmental and state-aid acquis	**Ukraine and Moldova formally integrated into the European Transport Corridors**, with preparatory works to deploy European standard gauge — the decade's most significant corridor enlargement
BRI	**Signature of a bilateral MoU** — that is the entire procedure. No ratification, no instrument, no clause	**None** — the format's selling point and its principal criticism	Exit is equally costless: Italy let its MoU lapse in Dec 2023
TITR	**Two doors.** (i) Corporate: an operator applies to the General Assembly and becomes a member. (ii) State: through political roadmaps, with no formal instrument	Commercial credibility (corporate); geopolitical alignment (State)	Ukraine, Bulgaria, Romania and Singapore participate without founding status. The announced Kazakhstan–Azerbaijan intergovernmental agreement would begin to build the missing State-level legal floor
INSTC	**Yes** — an accession clause. The applicant deposits an instrument of accession with the Secretariat; the Coordination Council notes it	Minimal — essentially political acceptance	Ten States have acceded since 2000. Afghanistan and Kuwait have requested membership; further States are reported to be studying the Agreement
TRACECA	**Yes** — the MLA is open. Application → decision of the Intergovernmental Commission → deposit of the instrument	Acceptance of the technical annexes — a genuine, if light, acquis	One of the few frameworks joining Iran and Türkiye with EU-aligned States
IMEC	**No accession clause.** The MoU does not provide for enlargement. Undefined — presumably by joint decision of the eight	Undefined; in practice, alignment with the Abraham Accords logic	**Greece, Israel, Jordan and Oman are corridor-relevant but not signatories**, a gap widely regarded as a design error, above all as regards Oman. Israel, Jordan and Egypt have requested membership; Cyprus leads a "Friends of IMEC" group; Oman is de facto part of the network (OECD 2026); extension to be decided by the eight signatories

Corridor	Clause & procedure	Conditionality	Recent / pending
Lobito	Yes on the treaty layer (LCTTFA); ad hoc on the MoU layer. Corridor States accede to the LCTTFA; partners sign the MoU or a further declaration of intent	LCTTFA: the transit obligations. MoU layer: explicit PGII / Global Gateway conditionality — transparency, anti-corruption, ESG, "high-standard" investment	**Tanzania brought in for the Atlantic-to-Indian-Ocean extension** — the clearest current case of enlargement by MoU
Northern Corridor	**Yes — an explicit, well-drafted clause. The model to copy.** (i) application; (ii) approval by the Council of Ministers; (iii) deposit of the instrument of accession with the Secretariat	Acceptance of the NCTTA and its protocols (transit, customs, charges, maritime, insurance, dangerous goods)	South Sudan and the DRC joined after the founding — proof the procedure works
Central Corridor	Yes — accession to the CCTTFA agreement. Application → Council of Ministers → deposit	Acceptance of the agency's mandate	The 2026 MoC creates a third pathway: **institutional interoperability without membership** — arguably more realistic than mutual enlargement
TKC / WBCG	TKC: by MoU amendment. WBCG: membership, not accession — a company or authority simply joins	TKC: SADC Transport Protocol. WBCG: commercial	**The most easily enlarged corridor in the world** — joining costs a subscription, not a ratification (Zambia, Zimbabwe, DRC drawn into the wider network)
Abidjan–Lagos	ECOWAS membership is the gateway. Corridor instruments open to ECOWAS members; the 2013 corridor treaty is closed to its five signatories	The ECOWAS acquis (ETLS, free movement, ISRT)	Extension logic runs inland to the Sahel — now complicated by the AES States' withdrawal from ECOWAS
GMS	The programme is closed at six; the **CBTA is not**. The CBTA contains accession provisions	CBTA: acceptance of the annexes and protocols	The interesting frontier is CBTA accession by non-GMS States — the best-drafted corridor transport treaty available for reuse
CAREC	Yes, by decision of the Ministerial Conference. A State applies; the Conference admits by consensus; no ratification, since there is no treaty	Political acceptance; commitment to the strategy and to CPMM data reporting	Georgia's admission (2016) showed it works. **The lowest-cost accession of any credible corridor** — the trade-off being that membership confers no rights

Annex C. Model Framework Agreement establishing the IMEC Organization

This model text adapts the generic *Model Framework Agreement on the Governance of an Economic Corridor* prepared for this policy paper to the specific features of IMEC: its inter-regional scope, its segment-based structure, the participation of a regional economic integration organisation (the European Union), the presence of corridor-relevant States outside the 2023 MoU, and the need for a security and resilience pillar. Elements in square brackets are to be completed or adapted by negotiators. The text is a working basis for discussion; it does not reflect the position of any government. It is designed so that the institutions of an earlier IMEC Charter (Chapter 8) can be carried over into it without change.

FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING THE INDIA–MIDDLE EAST–EUROPE ECONOMIC CORRIDOR ORGANIZATION

PREAMBLE

The Parties to this Framework Agreement,

Recalling the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law relating to sovereignty, territorial integrity and the sovereign equality of States;

Recalling also the Memorandum of Understanding on the Principles of an India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor signed in New Delhi on 9 September 2023, and the commitment of its participants to establish coordinating entities to address the technical, design, financing, legal and regulatory aspects of the Corridor;

Recalling further United Nations General Assembly resolutions 69/213 of 19 December 2014 on the role of transport and transit corridors in ensuring international cooperation for sustainable development and 70/197 of 22 December 2015 on sustainable multimodal transit corridors;

Mindful that transport, energy and digital connectivity between India, the Arabian Gulf, the Middle East and Europe is a driver of sustainable development, regional integration, economic security and shared prosperity;

Considering that the Corridor attains its full value only when supported by a stable, transparent and rules-based governance framework, capable of operating segment by segment while ensuring the coherence of the whole;

Reaffirming their commitment to the rules of the World Trade Organization, including freedom of transit and the Agreement on Trade Facilitation;

Recognizing the indispensable role of economic operators, infrastructure managers, financiers, civil society and parliaments in the development and ownership of the Corridor;

Desirous of ensuring the safety, security, resilience and environmental sustainability of the Corridor's physical and digital infrastructure;

Convinced that the Corridor should complement and interconnect with other corridors and gateways, in a spirit of cooperation rather than rivalry,

Have agreed as follows:

PART ONE — GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1 — Definitions

For the purposes of this Agreement: (a) "Corridor" means the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor, comprising the transport, energy and digital infrastructure, routes, nodes and facilities listed in Annex I, together with the related services and procedures; (b) "Segment" means a part of the Corridor identified as such in Annex I; (c) "Party" means a State or a regional economic integration organization for which this Agreement is in force; (d) "Corridor operator" means any public or private entity that operates, manages or

maintains a component of the Corridor; (e) "Organization" means the IMEC Organization established by Article 5; (f) "electronic transport document" means a document created, transferred or presented in electronic form in accordance with Annex IV; (g) "government access to data" means access by the public authorities of a Party to personal or commercial data held by private entities, including for national security and law-enforcement purposes.

Article 2 — Object and purpose

1. The object of this Agreement is to establish the governance of the Corridor and to define the rights and obligations of the Parties with respect to its development, operation, financing, security, resilience and enlargement.

2. The Parties shall pursue the following purposes: (a) to ensure the smooth, safe, efficient and sustainable movement of goods, services, persons, energy and data along the Corridor; (b) to harmonize the procedures, standards and documents necessary to that end; (c) to mobilize and coordinate the required financing; (d) to strengthen the resilience of the Corridor against physical, cyber, hybrid, climate-related and other disruptions; (e) to promote local value addition, employment and inclusive development along the Corridor; (f) to provide for the orderly accession of new Parties and the association of partners; (g) to promote cooperation and interoperability with other corridors.

Article 3 — Geographic scope and segments

1. The routes, nodes, segments and components of the Corridor are defined in Annex I, which includes a map.

2. Annex I may be amended by decision of the Council of Ministers in accordance with Article 11, paragraph 2, without recourse to the amendment procedure of Article 21. An amendment concerning a Segment located on the territory of a Party shall require the consent of that Party.

> *Drafting note. The separation between the map, amendable by the political organ, and the body of the Agreement follows the TEN-T technique. It allows routes outside chokepoints (for instance via Omani ports) or new gateways to be added without fresh ratification, while protecting each Party's sovereignty over its own territory.*

Article 4 — General principles

The Parties shall discharge their obligations in accordance with the following principles: sovereignty and sovereign equality; non-discrimination among the Parties and among operators; freedom of transit; regulatory transparency and predictability; financial and debt sustainability; good faith; resilience by design; and environmental and social sustainability.

PART TWO — INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Article 5 — Establishment, seat and legal personality

1. There is hereby established the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor Organization ("IMEC Organization"), whose seat shall be at [city].

2. The Organization shall possess international legal personality and, in the territory of each Party, the legal capacity necessary for the exercise of its functions, including the capacity to contract, to acquire and dispose of property, to receive funds and to institute legal proceedings.

3. The Organization and its officials shall enjoy the privileges and immunities necessary for the independent exercise of their functions, as specified in a headquarters agreement.

Article 6 — Organs

The Organization shall comprise: (a) the IMEC Summit; (b) the Council of Ministers; (c) the Executive Committee; (d) the Permanent Secretariat; (e) the Business Council; (f) the Civil Society Council; and (g) such subsidiary organs, including Segment Committees, as the Council of Ministers may establish. An IMEC Parliamentary Conference may be convened in accordance with Article 13.

Article 7 — The IMEC Summit

The Heads of State or Government of the Parties, and the Presidents of the European Council and of the European Commission, shall meet in an IMEC Summit [once a year] to provide strategic direction and political impetus to the Corridor.

Article 8 — The Council of Ministers

1. The Council of Ministers shall consist of one representative of ministerial rank from each Party and shall meet in ordinary session once a year and in extraordinary session at the request of a Party supported by [one third] of the Parties.

2. The Council of Ministers shall determine general policy, adopt the programme of work and the budget, adopt and amend the Annexes, establish subsidiary organs and decide on accession, association and observer status.

3. The Council of Ministers shall elect its Chair for a term of one year, on the basis of rotation among the Parties in a fixed order.

> *Drafting note. The annually rotating presidency in a fixed order is the defining feature of the "IMEC Alliance" hypothesis of the MENA2050 Declaration. It is retained here within the Organization, so that political ownership by each presidency is combined with the continuity provided by the Permanent Secretariat.*

Article 9 — The Executive Committee and Segment Committees

1. The Executive Committee shall consist of senior officials designated by each Party, including the national IMEC coordinators. It shall prepare the sessions of the Council, ensure the implementation of its decisions and supervise the Secretariat.

2. The Executive Committee shall establish technical committees, in particular on trade and transit facilitation, technical standards, energy, digital and data matters, finance, and security and resilience.

3. The Council of Ministers may establish a Segment Committee for any Segment, composed of the Parties on whose territory the Segment is located and of such other Parties, associates and observers as the Committee may invite. Segment Committees shall coordinate the development and operation of their Segment within the framework of the programme of work.

> *Drafting note. Segment Committees operationalise the MENA2050 concept of IMEC as "a flexible constellation of intermodal segments that can be financed, governed and developed independently". They allow the eastern maritime leg, the Gulf rail network, the northern land leg and the Mediterranean leg to advance at different speeds.*

Article 10 — The Permanent Secretariat

1. The Permanent Secretariat shall be headed by a Secretary-General appointed by the Council of Ministers for a term of [four] years, renewable once.

2. The Secretariat shall monitor the implementation of this Agreement, maintain the IMEC Observatory provided for in Article 19 and the risk register provided for in Article 18, publish an annual implementation report including on non-compliance, act as repository of data and documents, and perform such other functions as the Council of Ministers may entrust to it.

3. The staff of the Secretariat shall be appointed on the basis of merit and on fixed terms, with due regard to balanced representation of the Parties. The Secretary-General and staff shall neither seek nor accept instructions from any Party or external authority.

Article 11 — Decision-making

1. Decisions on constitutive matters (accession, the budget and scale of contributions, amendments to this Agreement and the establishment of organs) shall be taken by consensus.

2. Decisions on the programme of work, on Annex I and on the technical Annexes II to V shall be taken by consensus or, failing consensus after [two] sessions, by a [two-thirds] majority of the Parties present and voting. A Party that does not approve such a decision may declare, within [ninety] days, that it shall not be bound by it, without preventing its entry into force for the other Parties.

> *Drafting note. Paragraph 2 is the provision that prevents deadlock and permits variable geometry on technical matters, drawing on the progressive adoption of the GMS CBTA annexes. Consensus is preserved for all constitutive matters.*

Article 12 — The Business Council and the Civil Society Council

1. The Business Council shall be composed of representatives of Corridor operators, infrastructure managers, shippers, financiers and professional associations. It shall provide opinions to the Council of Ministers and the

Executive Committee and shall be consulted on any measure likely to affect materially the operating conditions of the Corridor.

2. The Civil Society Council shall be composed of representatives of civil society organizations, academia and local authorities of the Parties. It shall provide opinions on the social, environmental and development dimensions of the Corridor.

> *Drafting note. The experience of the Middle Corridor and of the Walvis Bay Corridor Group shows that operators govern corridors in fact; granting them an advisory seat as of right is preferable to unregulated informal influence. The Civil Society Council follows the MENA2050 proposal.*

Article 13 — IMEC Parliamentary Conference

The Organization shall support the convening, at least once a year, of an IMEC Parliamentary Conference composed of members of the national parliaments of the Parties and of the European Parliament, to promote legislative alignment and democratic ownership of the Corridor.

Article 14 — Financing

1. The operating budget of the Organization shall be financed by assessed contributions of the Parties, in accordance with the scale in Annex VI.

2. There is hereby established an IMEC Fund, which may receive contributions from Parties, sovereign investment funds, international financial institutions, development partners and private investors, and which shall include a project preparation facility. Its governance shall be set out in Annex VII.

3. The Organization shall maintain a costed and prioritized IMEC Investment Framework, adopted on the basis of published selection criteria, and shall agree common principles for the allocation of construction, demand, currency and political risks.

4. The provision of external financing shall confer no voting right in the organs of the Organization.

PART THREE — SUBSTANTIVE COOPERATION

Article 15 — Trade and transit facilitation

1. The Parties shall guarantee freedom of transit along the Corridor, consistent with their obligations under the WTO Agreements, and shall refrain from unnecessary delays or restrictions.

2. In accordance with Annex II, the Parties shall progressively implement: a transit-guarantee regime; one-stop border posts at land crossings; the use, where applicable, of the TIR system; harmonized customs and transport documents; electronic single windows and their interoperability; the mutual recognition of authorized economic operator status; and pre-agreed procedures for the continuity of flows in crisis situations.

Article 16 — Technical standards and interoperability

The Parties shall harmonize the technical standards applicable to the Corridor, including track gauge, axle load, loading gauge, signalling, port–rail interfaces, electrification, energy interconnection and alternative fuels, in accordance with Annex III, which shall provide for transition periods and interoperability with the European Transport Corridors and other connecting networks.

Article 17 — Digital and data governance

1. The Parties shall recognize electronic transport documents in accordance with Annex IV, the UNCITRAL Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records and UN/CEFACT standards.

2. The Parties shall ensure the cross-border data flows necessary for the operation of the Corridor. Any restriction shall be necessary and proportionate to a legitimate public-policy objective and shall not constitute arbitrary discrimination or a disguised restriction.

3. The Parties shall establish a common basis for data transfers, which may take the form of model contractual clauses, mutual recognition of data-protection regimes or modular commitments to which Parties may accede separately.

4. The Parties shall apply common safeguards concerning government access to data, drawing on the OECD Declaration on Government Access to Personal Data Held by Private Sector Entities.

5. An exception invoked on grounds of essential security shall not be self-judging and may be submitted to the procedure of Article 22.

Article 18 — Safety, security and resilience

1. The Parties shall cooperate in protecting the critical physical and digital infrastructure of the Corridor against physical, cyber, hybrid and climate-related threats, and in ensuring its continuity of operations.

2. In accordance with Annex V, the Parties shall establish: a register of critical nodes and a corridor risk assessment, updated at least annually; minimum security and cybersecurity standards for Corridor operators; mechanisms for screening foreign investment in critical assets; an incident-notification mechanism; a redundancy plan for maritime and land routes; mutual assistance for repair and the restoration of services; and a crisis-coordination mechanism.

3. Compliance with minimum resilience standards adopted under Annex V shall be a condition for the award of the IMEC label and for financing through the IMEC Fund.

4. The Executive Committee shall establish a Security and Resilience Committee, which shall coordinate with the competent national authorities and, as appropriate, with existing regional and international security arrangements.

5. Cooperation under this Article shall give priority to operational safety, infrastructure and cyber resilience, civil protection, crisis management and continuity of operations. This Agreement shall not affect the rights and obligations of the Parties under other agreements in the field of defence and security.

Article 19 — Performance monitoring: the IMEC Observatory

1. The Secretariat shall maintain an IMEC Observatory, building on the OECD Corridors' Connectivity Scoreboard and in co-operation with competent international organisations, which shall collect and publish, at least annually, indicators relating to transit times and their variability, border and port dwell times, logistics costs, volumes and modal split, non-tariff barriers, resilience incidents and the performance of completed assets.

2. Each Party shall provide the Secretariat with the data required for that purpose in a timely manner.

Article 20 — Inter-corridor cooperation

The Organization may conclude memoranda and agreements of cooperation with organs of other corridors, gateways and international organizations, with a view to interoperability, coordinated planning, information sharing and joint resilience.

PART FOUR — FINAL CLAUSES

Article 21 — Amendments

1. Any Party may propose an amendment, to be communicated to the Depositary and transmitted to all Parties. Amendments shall be adopted by consensus of the Council of Ministers and shall enter into force for the Parties having ratified them on the [thirtieth] day after the deposit of [two thirds] of the instruments of ratification.

2. The Annexes shall be amended in accordance with Article 11, paragraph 2, and not under this Article.

Article 22 — Settlement of disputes

1. The Parties shall settle by negotiation any dispute concerning the interpretation or application of this Agreement. 2. Failing settlement within [six] months, the dispute shall be submitted at the request of either Party to [conciliation / arbitration] in accordance with Annex VIII. 3. The Parties may agree at any time to any other means of peaceful settlement. 4. Disputes between investors and Parties under concession or investment agreements shall be settled in accordance with those agreements, which shall specify the seat, the applicable law and the enforcement of awards.

5. The Organization shall establish an independent grievance and accountability mechanism, accessible to persons and communities affected by Corridor projects coordinated or financed through the Organization, consistent with the environmental and social safeguards of the financing institutions concerned.

> *Drafting note. As Milena Mottola shows, corridors have given rise to investor–State arbitrations, to complaints before the accountability mechanisms of development banks and to domestic litigation, although not yet to interstate disputes (MPEPIL, 'Economic Corridors', paras 50–53). Paragraphs 4 and 5 provide a corridor-level answer to each of these.*

Article 22 bis — Transparency

1. The Parties shall publish this Agreement, its Annexes, the decisions of the Council of Ministers and the IMEC Investment Framework, subject to the protection of commercially confidential and security-sensitive information. 2. This Agreement shall be registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations, and notified to the World Trade Organization for information.

> *Drafting note. Mottola observes that corridor treaties have mostly not been registered with the UN Secretariat and are not notifiable under Article XXIV(7) GATT, which explains why some remain confidential (para. 35). Transparency is a condition of legitimacy and of investor confidence.*

Article 23 — Accession, association and observer status

1. Any State whose territory is crossed by the Corridor or by an extension of it listed or to be listed in Annex I may accede to this Agreement. The applicant shall submit a request to the Depositary; accession shall be subject to approval by the Council of Ministers and shall take effect upon deposit of an instrument of accession.

2. The Council of Ministers may grant associate status to Corridor operators, financing institutions and third-country partners, and observer status to States and international organizations, on such terms as it may determine. Pending their accession, [the Hellenic Republic, the Republic of Cyprus, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the State of Israel, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Sultanate of Oman] [corridor-relevant States] may be invited to participate as observers and in the relevant Segment Committees.

> *Drafting note. The Northern Corridor accession clause (request, Council approval, deposit) is the model. The observer and Segment Committee formulas allow corridor-relevant States to participate in the governance of the Segments that concern them without reopening the founding instrument and at a pace compatible with political conditions.*

Article 24 — Participation of regional economic integration organizations

A regional economic integration organization may become a Party to this Agreement. It shall declare the extent of its competence with respect to the matters governed by this Agreement and shall exercise its rights within the areas of its competence, alternatively with its member States, without cumulation of votes.

Article 25 — Relationship with other agreements and transitional provisions

1. This Agreement shall not affect existing bilateral or plurilateral agreements between the Parties relating to the Corridor, which shall be implemented in a manner consistent with it. 2. Upon entry into force of this Agreement, the Steering Committee of Sherpas and Special Envoys shall become the Executive Committee, the existing Working Groups (strategy, coordination and studies; transport; energy connectivity; digital connectivity; financing) shall become technical committees under Article 9, the IMEC label shall be integrated into the IMEC Investment Framework, the IMEC Ports Club may be associated with the Business Council, and the organs, decisions and annexes adopted under the [IMEC Charter] shall be carried over and shall continue to apply until modified in accordance with this Agreement.

Article 26 — Reservations, withdrawal, depositary, entry into force and authentic texts

1. [No reservations may be made to this Agreement.] 2. Any Party may withdraw by written notification to the Depositary, taking effect [twelve] months after receipt, without release from financial obligations accrued. 3. [The Secretary-General of the United Nations / the Government of [State]] shall be the Depositary. 4. This Agreement shall enter into force on the [thirtieth] day following the deposit of the [fifth] instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession. 5. The [Arabic, English, French, Hebrew and Hindi …] texts shall be equally authentic.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned, being duly authorized thereto, have signed this Agreement. DONE at [place], on [date].

ANNEXES

I. Routes, Segments and components of the Corridor (map) · II. Trade and transit facilitation · III. Technical standards and interoperability · IV. Electronic transport documents and data governance · V. Safety, security and resilience · VI. Scale of contributions · VII. IMEC Fund and project preparation facility · VIII. Settlement of disputes.

References and notes

Key reference: the work of Milena Mottola

- **Mottola, Milena, 'Economic Corridors'**, in Anne Peters (ed.), *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law* (MPEPIL), Oxford University Press, Oxford Public International Law, article last updated April 2024, https://opil.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law-epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e2279.
- **Mottola, Milena**, *Economic Corridors. Transnational Law and the Production of Space*, doctoral thesis in international law, University of Padua, 2025, https://www.research.unipd.it/handle/11577/3559758.
- Milena Mottola's Encyclopedia entry is the doctrinal backbone of this policy paper. Chapter 2 is built on it, and it is quoted, with paragraph numbers, in the executive summary, the lessons, the pathways, the conclusion, the corridor profiles and the model agreement: the definition of economic corridors as combining a physical and a functional dimension (paras 1–2); their genealogy, including the placement of IMEC as a counterweight to the BRI (paras 4–10); their economic rationale and the critique of extractivism (paras 11–12); corridors as "a further form of regional integration alternative to free trade areas and customs unions" (para. 15); the taxonomy contrasting a legislative development model with disjointed incrementalism (paras 19–23); the analysis of corridor treaties, soft law, national instruments and PPPs (paras 24–43); the typology of corridor management institutions (paras 44–49); disputes and accountability (paras 50–53); and the assessment of corridors as engines of sustainable inclusive development rather than enclaves of growth (paras 54–55). Her doctoral thesis complements the entry on the "corridor approach" and on corridors as legal institutions.

Key reference: the OECD assessment of IMEC (November 2026)

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The report is used in section 5.2 (governance architecture, Steering Committee, working groups, labelling criteria, Ports Club, enlargement), in section 5.3 (findings of the OECD Corridors' Connectivity Scoreboard and their governance implications), and in Chapters 3, 6, 7 and 8 (trade facilitation, chokepoints, stakeholder positions, pathways and the IMEC Observatory).

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Roger Bertozzi studied philosophy in Paris (École Normale Supérieure, Sorbonne) and has a long experience in relations with the European Institutions, Euro-Arab cooperation and international negotiations on trade and on climate, and in the aluminium industry. He co-founded the Federation of Aluminium Consumers in Europe (FACE) in 1998 and is its President. He also advised many years two leading aluminium producers, Emirates Global Aluminium (EGA) and RUSAL. He has been a Senior Advisor and negotiator for the UAE's Ministries of Economy and Planning and then of Foreign Trade, including during many years of EU-GCC Free Trade Agreement negotiations, and as UAE Delegate to the WTO, where from 2003 to 2010 he created and chaired the Sectoral Initiative on Raw Materials, and co-authored the Sectoral Initiative on environmental goods, technologies and services. He has been the Permanent Representative for the GCC of the Parliamentary Association for Euro-Arab Cooperation. Since 2010 he is the Vice-President of the EnergyPact Foundation, a Swiss based organisation dealing with Energy-Climate-Environment-Development issues, cybersecurity and the security of critical infrastructures. From 2015 to 2017 Roger advised the Moroccan Government as Special Advisor for the multilateral presidencies of the UN Climate Conferences COP21 and COP22 and participated in the cycle of the negotiation, ratification and entry into force of the Paris Climate Agreement. Roger volunteers at the Geneva University Hospitals where he participates in governance bodies and in research programs. He is a member of MENA2050 and the Chair of MENA2050's IMEC Task Force and Council.

MENA2050

MENA2050 is a regional development organisation. UK-registered and nonpartisan, it is dedicated to fostering long-term stability and economic integration across the Middle East and North Africa. Founded in 2021, the initiative deliberately bypasses active political conflicts to focus entirely on development-driven regional cooperation. It unites a vast network of policymakers, scientists, entrepreneurs, and researchers from Arab nations, Israel, Turkey, and Iran. By shifting the regional paradigm from historic division to mutual prosperity, it seeks to build a viable shared future by 2050.

The organization operates through dedicated committees tackling critical cross-border challenges. A primary focus is climate resilience, addressing water scarcity and managing the clean energy transition. It actively develops policies for the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) to anchor the region in global trade. Additional task forces work to secure fragile agrifood systems and prepare the local workforce for AI advancements. Furthermore, MENA2050 champions social empowerment, promoting regional gender equality and training future decision-makers. Ultimately, it delivers high-level policy briefs to help global stakeholders implement scalable, inclusive solutions.

MENA2050 recognizes that economic connectivity is the truest driver of lasting stability. By championing the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), the organization positions the region not as a geopolitical flashpoint, but as a vital, high-tech logistical bridge between continents.

This macro-economic anchoring is designed to create deep, multi-layered dependencies that make conflict too costly and cooperation the only logical path forward. It fundamentally shifts the local narrative from a zero-sum competition over resources to a collective effort to secure global supply chains, attract foreign direct investment, and build an integrated marketplace that benefits every nation involved.

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