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Dubai and Doha bourses climbed to 2009 closing highs, while Kuwait declined.

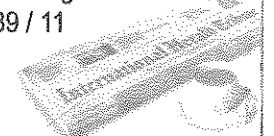
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Zimbabwe launched a customs union aimed at simplifying trade within 19 African countries.

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Experts call for prevention of financial crimes

2nd Middle East Advanced Financial Crime Prevention Programme hosted by Qatar Financial Centre begins

BY NASSER AL HARTHY

DOHA: The world is in an economic shambles that provides enormous opportunities to criminals to commit a wide range of offences and hence, there is a need to look how to prevent such things happening in the future.

This is one of the core parts of the issues that regional financial experts and regulators are debating at the ongoing 2nd Middle East Advanced Financial Crime Prevention Programme, hosted by the Qatar Financial Centre.

"We are trying to bring the best we can in terms of global international practice that deals with financial crime prevention and also deals with corporate governance and related issues," Nigel Morris-Cotterill, Head of the Anti Money Laundering Network told a press conference yesterday.

For Peter Antell, Managing Director of International Financial Crime Prevention and Compliance Training (IFCCT), the organisers of the event, the financial system is vulnerable to a wide spectrum of threats by organised criminal groups. He said that there was rather a traumatic increase in

the number of financial crimes or simply more marked financial crimes that already existed.

Speaking about the global financial crisis which is another subject of debate at the forum, the experts pointed to negligence in corporate governance as one of the causes of the crisis.

"Mistakes have been made, wrong risk assessments have been made because of the mere fact that people within financial institutions found it hard to work together closely and to form risk assessment teams as they should be comprised of all specific departments within a financial institution," said Gert Demmink, Head of IFCCT Faculty.

But Bryan Stirewalt, Director of Supervision at the Dubai Financial Services Association (DFSA) noted that over the past 20 years or more, financial sector around the globe has slowly been deregulated and regulators had relaxed rules that go along with financial sector. "Unfortunately too many people have relaxed supervision. And when you relax rules, you have to invest more in supervision on the entities that you are regulating not less. That is one of the causes of where



Peter Antell, Managing Director, IFCCT; Hany Abou El Fotouh, Director, Policy and Corporate Affairs, CI Capital Holding; Bryan Stirewalt, Director of Supervision, DFSA; Michael Webb, Managing Director, Financial Development and Policy, QFCRA; Nigel Morris Cotterill, Head, The Anti Money Laundering Network; and Gert Demmink, Head of IFCCT Faculty; at a press conference held during the 2nd Middle East Advanced Financial Crime Prevention Programme hosted by Qatar Financial Centre yesterday.

we are today," he said. However, the financial experts concurred that the core cause of the current crisis was rather corporate mis-management rather than financial crime.

"Negligence in corporate governance is very rarely regarded

as a crime, although there are specific corporate management offenses which may be criminal. Simply being a bad manager is not crime," said Morris-Cotterill.

With regard to the region Stirewalt pointed out that

international media continuously focuses on parts of the Gulf region with very rapid growth and questioning the relation to money laundering. "This is largely a perception issue, but perception can be reality many times. We need to

be very active in communicating exactly what we are doing to prevent financial crimes and money laundering in this region in order to correct those perceptions," he said.

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