

EUROMONEY

Duet Group

Duet Group aims to manage \$1 billion in the Middle East and Africa within three to four years. Today the region accounts for about 10% of the \$2 billion of assets managed by the alternatives house.

Duet MENA, which was licensed by the Dubai International Financial Centre in October 2008, aims to build a multi-strategy Middle East and North Africa Opportunities Fund to about \$250 million by mid 2011.

Next year, it hopes to launch a \$250 million North Africa real estate fund to capitalize, for example, on severe hotel shortages in such markets as Libya, where business traffic is surging.

Chief executive, Hedi Ben Mlouka, is Tunisian. He knew group chief executive Osman Semerci at Merrill Lynch, where Semerci was global head of fixed income, while he was head of Middle East equity.

By 2010, Duet Group hopes to launch a Sub-Saharan Africa Special Situations Fund, aiming at \$100 million in investments. It will take large minority stakes in small companies, in such sectors as brewing, insurance, and agriculture. A Sub-Saharan Africa real estate fund might follow.

This spring, Duet Group acquired New Star Asset Management's troubled Heart of Africa fund, which was worth about \$40 million before it was suspended in December. The fund's equity in Malawi and Ghana, which consisted of banking and commodity-export companies, is being replaced with investments benefiting from consumer demand growth in sub-Saharan Africa outside South Africa.

"We think Africa is the next Asia. This is just the beginning of the boom," says Henry Gabay, Duet Group's co-founder (above).

