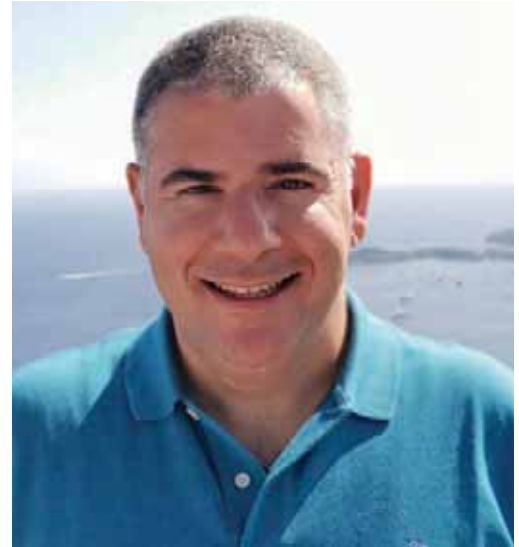


Jamil Elbahou

(CEO & Chief Underwriting Officer - ConnectUW)

Jamil Elbahou, CEO & Chief Underwriting Officer at London-based MGA and Lloyd's coverholder Connect Underwriting, discusses in his interview with Al Bayan Magazine in its annual issue, how Covid-19 has accelerated changes in the insurance industry in so many different ways. He further shares the latest achievements and developments of their company, as well as shedding lights on their top risk concern. According to Elbahou, cyber is a continually evolving class and is still seen as an unknown abyss.



We have been successful in establishing ourselves as reputed London Market

• Covid-19 has accelerated changes in the insurance industry in so many different ways. How did you adapt to these changes and what is your business model to deal with the current circumstances and to ensure the current and future success of your company?

- Insurers who already had a technology platform in place were automatically one step ahead of their market peers when COVID struck and the world went in a global lockdown. We were in a good place, having developed our own platform – Connect Marketplace, which we were already using to support and electronically bind our business. Moving to a 100% remote model was a smooth transition for us, so business as usual for both our underwriters and clients. Even though the London Market has started to open up again, we continue to develop our technology operations so we can provide our clients with both an underwriting office in the heart of the City and an online model.

CYBER IS A CONTINUALLY EVOLVING CLASS

• It said that cyber is now a matter of concern to insurers & reinsurers who would need State backing to be able to cover it. Do you share this view?

- It's fair to say that Cyber is a continually evolving class and is still seen as an unknown abyss. Many will agree that the market does not know enough about the exposure to the insurer's balance sheet as yet. We do write some cyber risks, but we are very selective and cautious in our allocation of capacity in this class. Like all insurers in the London Market, we are treading very carefully in the cyber space, working closely with our capacity providers.

CLIMATE CHANGE

• What is your top risk concern?

- Our top risk concern at a macro level would have to be Climate Change and the impact it has on the business we write, and how we write it. Climate Change really took its toll this year on Catastrophe

losses, and we saw some dramatic events occur due to changes in weather patterns, such as the flooding in Europe, extreme heat and bush fires across the world. Climate and weather patterns are becoming more and more volatile and in my view are non-reversible. The fall-out of these events is that current catastrophe models need to be updated, particularly in the Property D&F market, to deal with these new environmental occurrences.

WE HAVE SEEN VERY FEW PRICING REDUCTIONS

• Global reinsurance companies have settled huge compensation due to Covid-19 & natural catastrophes. Are we starting to see an increase in the prices and conditions of some lines in the Middle East and North Africa similar to the rest of the world?

- We write a worldwide book of business and we see the majority of the large global placements that come into London. Although rates differ between the classes of business we write, most of the business we saw in 2021, whether that be from MENA or the rest of the world, either had a slight increase in price or remained flat. We have seen very few pricing reductions and where we have seen discounts, this is the insured giving up coverage, rather than obtaining a real-time discount.

FIFTH YEAR OF UNDERWRITING

• What are the latest achievements and developments of your company?

- We are heading into our fifth year of underwriting and we have been successful in establishing ourselves as reputed London Market. Our strategy has remained the same since we set up in 2018 - we are a boutique reinsurer underwriting predominantly XOL business. In terms of our plan of action for 2022, it's to continue on our path, underwriting cautiously and where we feel it's appropriate, grow our business. This at present is in the energy and heavy industry sectors, where we see mounting opportunities.

