



## Jamil Elbahou, CEO and Chief Underwriting Officer at London-based MGA Connect Underwriting, comments on the rate of recovery in the global markets and the impact on pricing and opportunities.



**After the global crisis of COVID-19 and the global economic recession, how do you evaluate the state of the market today in terms of prices?**

With regard to the global crisis of COVID, here we are in yet another wave, so the pandemic is far from over. The crisis will continue throughout 2022, bringing prolonged challenges to the insurance market. Back in 2020, the insurance market coped with the verdicts to establish whether insurers were liable for COVID-related claims, such as Business Interruption. Overnight Insurers tightened their coverage and added pandemic clauses, with those continuing to offer pandemic cover hiking up prices. Where we operate in the reinsurance sector, we are not seeing the market start to soften as yet and we haven't seen price reductions. Most of the business we have seen has either a slight increase in price, or the price has remained flat. I believe this trend in pricing will continue throughout 2022.

**What are the most active and prosperous countries? In your opinion, has there been a recovery in some markets?**

In terms of pricing, recovery rates differ across territories and classes of business, so it is difficult to identify which countries are generally on a good road to recovery across the board. We write a worldwide book, especially global programs. In the business we see, there have been very few pricing reductions and where we have seen discounts, this has been due to the insured relinquishing coverage, rather than obtaining a real-time discount. This is good news for our industry, but it won't last forever, so we need to take advantage of the hardening market and carefully build our book where it makes sense to do so.

**With the launch of Connect Underwriting at the global and European levels in particular, tell me about the launch and development, and is it up to expectations,**

**and as we know there was a new center for the company?**

Connect Underwriting is a British company and has had the same global outlook since Day One. This is our fourth year of underwriting and we are proud of the distribution partnerships we enjoy with the world's leading intermediaries, the majority of which are based in London's Square Mile.

**Certainly the markets always need reinsurers: What are the advantages of your company and what is the best thing it offers?**

Having started underwriting in 2018, we are no longer a new start up and we have worked hard to establish ourselves as a reputed London Market. We have spent time and effort developing relationships with Lloyd's and selected International brokers. As well as providing our clients with much needed 1st class capacity, we are specialists in the regions and the classes in which we underwrite and we apply a very technical underwriting approach to evaluate each and every risk on its own merit.

**What is your strategy in light of competition and challenges in this field? What is your plan of action for next year?**

Our strategy has remained the same since we set up in 2018. We are a boutique reinsurer underwriting predominantly XOL business. Due to the nature of our business, we ultimately do not engage in competitive behaviour, although we appreciate that competition is a challenge for brokers and local companies in protecting their market share. However, we believe that the London Reinsurance Market still remains an attractive proposition for large global businesses, which is the space in which we operate. In terms of our plan of action for 2022, it's to continue on our path, underwriting cautiously and looking to grow carefully.