

Anti-Corruption Commission
Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Regional Bureau for
Arab States

Conclusions of the
Conference on "Building Strategic Anti-Corruption Partnerships in the Arab Region"
Amman, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
26-27 October 2010

Renewing the participating Arab countries' commitment to pursue anti-corruption efforts in accordance with related international standards and good practices, particularly the UN Convention against Corruption, which has been adopted by 16 Arab countries so far,

Reinforcing the content of the Arab Summit's resolution in Doha in 2009, which articulates the Arab leaders' determination to continue efforts aimed at deepening good governance practices and implementing the principles of transparency, responsibility, accountability and public participation,

Expressing the conviction that development efforts in the Arab region are increasingly in need of better utilization of local resources and foreign aid, which requires a focus on reducing corruption opportunities, especially in sectors that have a direct impact on the daily lives of citizens,

Supporting the work of the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network, which is an inclusive regional mechanism and a vital framework for the exploration of existing challenges in the countries of the region, and the development of possible solutions that correspond to the realities and aspirations of these countries, and

Striving to build effective and coordinated strategic partnerships in the Arab region that would facilitate cooperation between different State institutions, parliamentarians, civil society, private sector, and donors and technical assistance providers, while enhancing the roles of these actors and promoting complementarities between their anti-corruption efforts,

Participants in the Conference on "Building Strategic Anti-Corruption Partnerships in the Arab Region", held in Amman on 26-27 October 2010, agree to adopt the following Regional Conclusions:

1. Corruption is one of the major challenges that face the Arab region at the turn of the first decade of this millennium, with negative implications for the ongoing efforts to improve citizens' welfare, protect human rights and achieve fruitful integration in the global economic environment. The region has started a new phase of openness in addressing the issue of corruption, overcoming obstacles that have previously prevented the mobilization of adequate resources to confront this problem. Nonetheless, concrete responses to related challenges have not risen to the level of expectations yet; thus requiring stakeholders to take lead in developing and implementing coordinated and measurable national strategies that seek to reinforce anti-corruption standards and practices.

2. Implementing the UN Convention against Corruption does not stop at the mere adoption of legal texts, but also requires the existence of political will and technical capacities that are needed to execute these laws in reality; for this reason, priority should be given to reviewing and assessing gaps in the implementation of existing legal frameworks and identifying ways to make them more effective.

3. Representatives of participating Arab countries aspire to achieve concrete progress in the area of anti-corruption. They recognize that their countries face a number of common challenges; but, they also believe that each country has particular circumstances that must be taken into consideration. The valuable contribution that this conference has made in clarifying features that are specific to middle-income countries, high-income and resource-rich countries, and conflict-affected countries has demonstrated that corruption risks are present in each of those cases, albeit in different forms; and that related responses may therefore differ depending on the particularities of each situation. Accordingly, it is important to continue the dialogue that was launched at this conference regarding the specificities of each category of countries, with view to enabling the development of national initiatives, which correspond to the corruption situation and the requirements to address it in each concerned country, while benefiting from existing related regional and international mechanisms.

4. Enhancing transparency, integrity, and accountability in budget processes, including the monitoring of public expenditures and revenue collection, is a major entry point for corruption prevention in Arab countries, and accordingly, must be highlighted as an essential component of national anti-corruption systems and brought to the attention of decision-makers who are responsible for developing anti-corruption programmes and policies.

5. The public's right to access to information must be reinforced, not only through affirmative legislation, but also through genuine partnerships that support credible assessments, based on clear indicators in different anti-corruption areas. The scarcity of available information on the magnitudes and forms of corruption on the one hand, and on the actual performance of related

legal and institutional frameworks on the other, is considered a real obstacle in Arab countries, and causes a substantial challenge for governments that are required to provide such information to decision-makers as well as to citizens.

6. Civic participation in anti-corruption efforts is essential. Efforts must be directed towards the identification of ways to enhance the role of the elected representatives of the public, and civil society representatives, and to develop their capacities in supporting the implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption, monitoring the State's performance in administering public affairs, reinforcing citizenship concepts and integrity values, and formulating a focused public opinion that deliberately and persistently calls for anti-corruption. In return, efforts must be made to enhance the openness of public officials to concepts and mechanism of civic participation in a manner that is conducive to constructive dialogue and positive change in the dynamics of citizen-state relationships.

7. The Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network is invited to explore and support strategies to engage the private sector in a specialized regional dialogue on means to utilize concepts of social responsibility and corporate governance with a view to enhancing trust in public-private interactions, given the significant role that this trust plays in attracting investment and spurring economic growth and achieving development.

8. Establishing a comprehensive understanding on "conflicts of interest" and translating this concept into clear legislative and administrative measures and specific practices is an important area of work that requires additional support. In this regard, there is a need for developing related regional tools and guidelines that take into consideration international standards and experiences and address the concept in a holistic manner, without disregarding its specific manifestations in particular sectors, with a view to helping national stakeholders take concrete action in this area.

9. Some Arab countries have made important steps in administrative simplification and e-government. This helped reduce corruption risks and fostered a new environment that apparently contributed to lowering corruption perception levels and enhanced trust in government, thus drawing attention to the significance of such measures for corruption prevention efforts, and providing opportunities for peer learning among Arab countries in this regard.

10. Weak law enforcement against corruption crimes is a major impediment that undermines confidence in the seriousness and effectiveness of anti-corruption systems as a whole, and is an important challenge that is shared by most Arab countries. Addressing this challenge requires strengthening judicial independence and integrity, developing related investigation and prosecution capacities, protecting witnesses, whistleblowers and collaborators of justice, and finally, enhancing Arab and international judicial cooperation mechanisms which are generally characterized by protracted and complicated procedures that do not correspond to the advanced nature of such crimes.

11. In Arab countries, the prevalent method in fighting corruption is "command and control", which is a method that relies on issuing laws and using them as the primary tool to cause behavioral changes. International experience has shown that this method may not be adequate. Efforts must be directed to encourage a new approach that merges this method with a method that utilizes "incentives and values" as a tool to cause tangible changes in the behavior of individuals and institutions in the public and private sectors, without undermining human rights principles.

12. Establishing linkages in the Arab countries between anti-corruption efforts and efforts aimed at improving living standards, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, has become an incessant need. These linkages may be achieved through a focus on strengthening transparency, integrity and accountability in sectors that provide significant portions of State income, which is usually used to invest in development (such as extractive sectors, customs and taxation), as well as in sectors that provide basic development services (healthcare, education, energy and water). Exploring corruption risks in these sectors and working to reduce them requires a comprehensive approach that addresses cross-cutting issues, such as public procurement systems, human resources and financial management, and then continues to address the specificities of each sector with a view to identifying customized responses.

Participants commit to work on disseminating these Conclusions to their peers in Arab countries, while seeking to take them into consideration in as much as their roles and mandates permit, especially in relation to the development, implementation, evaluation and coordination of national anti-corruption policies and programmes,

Participants welcome the Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries Project that was launched by UNDP at the end of the conference, and that will be implemented in 2011-2014 building on strategic partnerships at the national, regional and international levels,

Participants commend the flexibility that the Project provides for Arab countries in terms of enabling them to identify their priorities and benefit from its services, within the four main components (a) anti-corruption assessments, (b) implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption, (c) strengthening integrity in sectors that provide basic services, and (d) anti-corruption in conflict-affected situations,

Participants express highest degrees of appreciation and gratitude to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for hosting this conference, and to His Excellency the Prime Minister, Mr. Samir Al Rifai for his patronage of its functions,

Participants also express their profound thanks and appreciation to the Anti-Corruption Commission in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and its President, His Excellency Mr. Sameeh BINO, and to the Regional Bureau for Arab States at the UN Development Programme for their valuable efforts that has contributed to the successful completion of this conference.

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