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Fifth meeting of the
Anti-Corruption Community of Practice in the Arab Region

"Programming for Social Accountability"

Amman, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
28-29 June 2012

DRAFT PROGRAMME

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I. BACKGROUND

1. Corruption has always been a concern for citizens in Arab countries albeit in various degrees and forms. It has been one of the key drivers behind many regime changes after independence in the late 19th and early 20th century, and featured in political discourse and intellectual production. The consensus is that anti-corruption is deeply rooted in the religious and cultural history of the region. Concrete efforts to actively prevent and combat corruption, however, have considerably fluctuated over the years, and have, by and large, failed to become institutionalized and enshrined in state and society.

2. Since the 1980s, the Arab region witnessed a noticeable growth in the main mechanisms by which citizens hold their states to account including elections and multi-party parliaments; however this growth did not adequately reflect in reducing corruption or promoting accountability, transparency, and integrity. It also did not translate into satisfactory developmental results compared to other regions, and to this region's own potentials, as repeatedly asserted by the different volumes of the Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) first published in 2002. The slow trickle-down of economic benefits, despite the economic growth achieved, and the persistence of limitations on freedoms and public participation, despite various the various reforms adopted, pointed to a serious governance problem.

3. More recently, as external and internal pressures to strengthen democratic governance mounted, more attention started to turn to corruption after long years of avoidance. Gradually, various anti-corruption reform initiatives came into existence, mostly spurred by the advent of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) and the momentum created by regional frameworks such as the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET), the Good Governance for Development (GfD) in the Arab Countries Initiative, and the MENA Development Forum (MDF) among others. Despite of the progress achieved in a number of countries, the overall impact of these initiatives remained relatively limited compared to the gravity of the problem as perceived by citizens and businesses, and as often expressed by experts and practitioners across the region.

4. The recent events of 2011 and their ongoing ramifications are inevitably part of this historic progression. They highlight the deep-rooted developmental challenges that exist in the region and the heterogeneous political, economic, and social circumstances of its countries. In some, the citizens' deep dissatisfaction with the performance of their governments triggered significant and complex transformations that are expected to continue unfolding in the years to come. In most of the other countries, and despite the absence of transformation, there is a recognition that more needs to be done in order to make governance institutions more transparent and accountable, and therefore more responsive to citizen needs.

5. Although corruption may not be the primary reason behind the region's states of affairs, it certainly is a major public grievance that is voiced by citizens across the region, and without doubt stands at the forefront of public attention in and as a key item in the reform agenda in the majority of Arab countries. The current drive against corruption in the region is essentially a drive for more accountability to ensure that decision-makers adhere to publicly agreed standards, norms, and goals. The experience accumulated so far in Arab countries, as well as in other comparative situations, indicate that the mere introduction of additional formal democratic mechanisms, such as elections and multi-party parliaments, and the adoption of more laws that criminalize corruption may not necessarily be enough to establish appropriate accountability mechanisms.

6. Indeed, accountability can be vertical - imposed externally on governments, formally through electoral processes or indirectly through civic engagement, and it can be horizontal - imposed by governments internally through institutional mechanisms for oversight and checks and balances. Yet,

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both vertical and horizontal forms of accountability have been found to be unsatisfactory on many counts such as inadequate electoral processes, insufficient oversight institutions, secrecy laws, lack of entry points for citizens, and others. While it is critically important for reform efforts in the region to continue addressing the shortcomings of related processes, it is also important to consider additional means to strengthen accountability, especially in the region's current context where citizens feel more empowered to take action and where the public space for citizen participation in public affairs has indeed expanded, at least for now.

II. THEMATIC FOCUS

7. Social accountability refers to a form of accountability that emerges through actions by citizens and civil society organization (CSOs) aimed at holding the state to account. It also includes efforts by government and other actors such media, private sector and donors to support these actions. Social accountability is the operationalization of a number of key principles which are at the heart of both democratic governance and UNDP's human rights-based approach (HRBA) to development. It can enhance development outcomes and progress towards the achievement of human development overall as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

8. There are many different mechanisms and tools that can enhance social accountability – for example, strengthening access to information, strengthening independent media, or using specific tools, such as citizen report cards or citizen juries. Developing programmes that promote social accountability provides added value to the ongoing effort to strengthen accountability and address corruption. It complements horizontal accountability by providing additional sets of checks and balances on the State, and enables citizens to exercise continuous oversight when there is no opportunity for vertical accountability.

9. So far in the region, most anti-corruption efforts have focused on horizontal accountability and to a lesser extent on vertical accountability. In the Arab countries that are witnessing transformations, more emphasis is being brought now to the latter; however, across the region, efforts to strengthen social accountability continue to be scarce and under-supported. While UNDP Country Offices in Arab states have supported a number of related initiatives, the organization's support to related efforts can certainly be enhanced to complement other anti-corruption and governance initiatives implemented by UNDP, national counterparts, and other international development partners.

10. The fifth meeting of the Anti-Corruption Community of Practice in the Arab region focuses on social accountability taking into consideration the current situation in the Arab region and the different circumstances of its countries. It promotes an interactive discussion on related concepts and practices, drawing on comparative experiences from the region and beyond, while encouraging joint thinking on possible programmes that may be developed and implemented at the regional, country, and local levels. The meeting is also an opportunity to share updates on anti-corruption initiatives at the country, regional, and global levels conducted by UNDP and participating international development partners.

III. OBJECTIVES

11. The overall aim of this meeting is to introduce the concept of social accountability into UNDP's anti-corruption programming in Arab states and enable members of the community of practice to be more responsive to the increasing demands of their national counterparts in these areas. More specifically, the meeting seeks to achieve the following objectives:

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- Provide an interactive platform to share updates about respective anti-corruption efforts;
- Explain the concepts and practices of social accountability and how it fits within UNDP's work on governance and development;
- Exchange expertise and experiences on social accountability initiatives from the region and beyond; and
- Identify entry points and challenges of programming for social accountability in the Arab countries, as well as linkages with current anti-corruption efforts, and possible synergies with other areas of democratic governance.

IV. PARTICIPANTS

12. Participants include leading governance and anti-corruption practitioners from UNDP Country Offices in Arab states and a selected group of national counterparts including governmental and non-governmental experts. Representatives of regional and international organizations and other donors and technical assistance providers will also join the meeting.

V. METHODOLOGY

13. The meeting is designed to deliver particular learning objectives in an interactive manner over a period of two days. It will include (i) plenary presentations with Q&As and open discussions to exchange information, clarify concepts, and share experiences; and (ii) small-group discussions to enable participants to consider the application of acquired knowledge in their respective countries. The working languages will be Arabic and English with simultaneous interpretation in both languages.

VI. AGENDA

Thursday, 28 June 2012	
08.30 – 09.00	**Registration**
09.00 – 11.00	**First Session – plenary** **Updates on UNDP's Anti-Corruption Work at the Country, Regional, and Global Levels** ***Objective:*** *To enable participants to share updates about their respective anti-corruption efforts in the Arab states as well receive updates about the progress of anti-corruption efforts in the context of the regional and global programmes .*

- **Opening Remarks**
- **Update on UNDP's Regional Project on Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (ACIAC)**

- **Updates from Country Offices**

11.00 – 11.15	**Break**

11.15 – 13.00	**Second Session – plenary** **Concepts and Practices of Social Accountability** ***Session Objective:*** *Enable participants to explore in detail the concepts and practices of social accountability and how it links to the work of UNDP and in particular to anti-corruption programming as well as other areas of democratic governance in the Arab states.*

- **Presentation**
- **Expert Panel**
- **Open Discussion**

13.00 – 14.00	**Lunch**

14.00 – 15.30	**Third Session – plenary** **Promoting Social Accountability to Address Corruption in Public Service Delivery** ***Session Objective:*** *Enable participants to explore linkages between promoting social accountability and addressing corruption in sectors, and share experiences and expertise on programming in related areas.*

- **Presentation**
- **Expert Panel**
- **Open Discussion**

15.30 – 16.00	

16.00 – 17.30	**Fourth Session – plenary** **Social Accountability and the Implementation of the UNCAC** ***Session Objective:*** *Enable participants to identify relevant parts of the United Nations Convention against Corruption that can be used as entry points to promote social accountability, and explore how social accountability initiatives can contribute to the implementation of the convention.*

- **Presentation**
- **Expert Panel**

- **Open Discussion**

19.30	**Social Event** *For further information and registration, please contact the organizers.*

Friday, 29 June 2012

09.00 – 10.30	**Fifth Session – plenary** **Using Social Media to Promote Social Accountability** ***Session Objective:*** *Enable participants to explore the opportunities and challenges associated with using social media to promote social accountability drawing on successes and lessons learned from related initiatives.*

- **Presentation**
- **Expert Panel**
- **Open Discussion**

10.30 – 11.00	**Break**
11.00 – 13.30	**Sixth Session – small group exercise** **Training on Programming for Social Accountability** ***Session Objective:*** *Support participants to develop ideas of anti-corruption programmes aimed at promoting social accountability in their respective countries and consider the challenges and added value of implementing such programmes.*

- **Presentation**
- **Small groups**
- **Presentation in plenary**

13.30 – 14.00	**Seventh Session – plenary** **Conclusion and way forward**

- **Summary**
- **Concluding remarks**