Good Governance for Development (GfD) in Arab Countries Initiative

THIRD STEERING GROUP MEETING AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL

CAIRO, 29 NOVEMBER 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Third Steering Group Meeting at Ministerial Level of the Good Governance for Development (GfD) in Arab Countries Initiative took place in Cairo, Egypt on 29 November 2007. This high-level meeting provided a forum for ministerial delegations from Arab countries to present the progress made with their national public governance reform agendas and, together with OECD countries delegations, to discuss the strategic orientations for the next phase of implementation of the programme (2008-2010). Both Arab and OECD countries have expressed their strong commitment to the Initiative's future strategic directions and programme of work for 2008-10. The meeting brought together high level representatives from international organizations; 11 Arab and 24 OECD countries.

General orientations of the GfD Initiative

Participants welcomed the continuation of the GfD Initiative and renewed their political commitment to its implementation. They stressed the importance of further adapting the Initiative to Arab countries needs in view of increasing the benefits of the regional policy dialogue. The objective of the GfD Initiative is to contribute to enhanced public sector performance, transparency and accountability in Arab Countries. The programme aims at ensuring progress on public sector and governance reform, which in turn would lead to an improved environment for social, economic and human development in the Arab region. By addressing cross-cutting issues such as participation, media, gender and environment, the GfD policy dialogue can be used as an important tool to promote common values between Arab and OECD countries. The general understanding at the meeting was that GfD I has established a solid foundation for more targeted activities in the second phase. At present, trust in the commitment and capacity of the partners has been established permitting deeper cooperation in the second phase.

Participants appreciated the continuation of the working group structure and endorsed the focus themes for 2008-10, which will be addressed in the framework of the working groups. They agreed on the importance of setting national networks and institutional frames for governance reform. The role of GfD in developing national networks and connecting them with international practitioners and experts was particularly recognised as a major achievement.

Impact of GfD I on public governance reforms In Arab countries

Regional policy dialogue and capacity-building activities have contributed to a better understanding of common challenges, to improved public policies and concrete reform outcomes in the areas of e-government, administrative simplification, regulatory reform, budgeting, human resource management and anti-corruption. OECD and Arab Countries regularly participate in national and regional study visits and pilot projects. Participants stressed that the GfD Initiative is focused on completing and strengthening efforts of Arab countries. Most Arab states have prioritised the importance of good governance and have developed plans of

reform accordingly. These national agendas for reform are a major tool which can be used to promote systematic and effective reform in key areas. They should also become an important instrument for realising the *Gf*D input in national reforms. Several participants shared their experiences in the implementation of overall programs of reform and indicated their interest in connecting these experiences to the *Gf*D activities. Several success stories that benefited from the *Gf*D input were mentioned during the conference.

Strategic directions for the implementation of *Gf*D II

1. **Deepening policy dialogue, knowledge and capacity building at the regional level:** The common goal of raising governance standards can be better served, as many high level representatives stated, by common action and active co-operation. The importance of regional dialogue and capacity building to support and reinforce the implementation of reforms was a message repeated throughout the meeting.

2. **Fostering peer advice and partnerships for reform at the national level**: Participants expressed their full support to increase peer advice in the second phase of the program and to link this orientation to specific projects of reform at the local level. Participants recognised the major role that the OECD has to play in supporting the process of joint learning and peer advice.

3. **Monitoring and measuring progress**: Several participants underlined the importance of measuring progress in governance reform by setting up adequate systems of indicators. The role of comparison is critical in order to set objectives. *Gf*D offers an excellent opportunity to work in conjunction with Arab States in this direction. This is a long term objective that has to be built on rigorous methodologies adapted to the needs and conditions of the Arab region.

4. **Anchoring the GfD Initiative in a regional framework of institutions and networks for reform**: Several countries called international donors and organisations to provide financial support for the projects or reforms linked to the GfD. OECD and UNDP Secretariats were invited to develop a strategy for resource mobilisation. High level representatives called for an increased participation of officials from Arab and OECD countries in GfD activities and asked governments to assure their financial support. The GfD supports initiatives by Arab governments to create regional training and expertise centres in order to promote regional capacity-building. Participants invited OECD and UNDP Secretariats to take the necessary steps for the creation of a network to support the implementation of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC).

Background documents

Ministers and high level representatives approved the OECD-MENA **Programme of Work 2008-10** and the **UNDP-POGAR Programme of Work 2008-2010**. The main outcomes of the meeting were summarized in the **Chair's conclusions** that were agreed on by the participants.