Statement

By

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Theme on

"Citizens, Civil Society, and Public Sector Reform within the Arab Region"

First Regional Meeting of the Working Group

Thursday, 29 September 2004

Gefinor Rotana Hotel, Beirut – Lebanon

Your Excellency, Mr.Fouad Al-Saniora Prime Minister of Lebanon

Excellency, Mr. Jean Oghassabian
Minister of State for Administrative Reform,

Excellency, Mr. Patrick Renauld, Head of the European Delegation

Distinguished guests from the Arab countries

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here at this significant event. On behalf of the UNDP, I would like to congratulate for your great vision and leadership in turning this promising idea into a reality.

Nations from all parts of the world are coming to the conclusion that effective, efficient, fair and responsive governments are an essential basis for development of our economies and societies. We have gathered here today to address the challenges of public sector reform in the Arab countries and the means for its development on the basis of the participation of citizens and civil society organizations in order to improve the performance of the public sector and to provide citizens with the best services.

The framework created by this initiative is flexible, and while its primary focus is formulation and implementation of the most effective policies, it can complement and build upon the very important bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes that are supporting development in the region.

Several Arab countries have embarked on projects to reform various areas of public administration but poor public accountability and governance hamper progress.

Real administrative reforms will depend on greater participation of people, NGO and civil society organizations. Without good governance and more participatory politics, real reforms would remain stalled. The key to public sector reform is to admit first that the public sector is at the service of people

Ladies and Gentlemen

The challenge for UNDP has been to take a systemic and strategic approach to governance that meets national priorities. Reform of state institutions so that they become more efficient, accountable and transparent is a cornerstone of good governance. Effective reform requires political commitment, which should include the support of the private sector and civil society.

Civil society represents the people working together for common purposes. Civil society organisations can fill the vacuum left by the state, and can advocate and monitor reforms that foster sustainable human development.
Civil service organisations that are involved with development complement the state. UNDP considers collaboration with these organisations important because of their responsiveness, innovation, direct relationship with the poor, and capacity to stimulate participation and articulate local views.

In many developing countries, including the Arab states, however, such organisations are weak. They lack capacities in issues analysis, advocacy and outreach, networking, management and fund raising.

Although UNDP's traditional partner has been government, it has developed its partnership with civil society. In many programmes UNDP capitalises on government trust of UNDP to encourage interaction and cooperation with civil society and the private sector.

UNDP helps these organisations develop their capacities to plan, manage and implement activities effectively and accountably and to research, advocate and monitor issues of sustainable human development, including poverty and gender.
UNDP helps civil society organisations network, cooperate and share information for social and development purposes and participate in aid coordination and management.

UNDP also plays a significant role in "civic education", helping national civil society organisations define and implement country-specific programmes that build social cohesion, help resolve conflicts, increase people's awareness of their rights and responsibilities and nurture participation in development and governance.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

UNDP has great faith that Arab societies are capable of meeting the challenges ahead of them and capable of achieving development for their people.

On behalf of UNDP, I thank you all for your participation and critical inputs into this workshop and for your important contributions to our ultimate objective of democratic governance. We look forward to your insights and, above all, suggestions for the way forward.

Thank you