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Good Governance for Development (G*f*D) in the Arab Countries:
An Arab Regional Initiative in Partnership with OECD and UNDP
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On behalf of the United States, I would like to thank the Government of Egypt for hosting this Ministerial and for its leadership in helping advance this important initiative of Good Governance for Development (G*f*D) in the Arab Countries. I would also like to thank H.E. Mr. Ahmed Darwish, Minister of State for Administrative Development, Egypt and H.E. Mr. Seiichiro Noboru, Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan for co-chairing this initiative.

I am honored to be here this morning with you, particularly in the presence of so many distinguished ministers and senior officials from the region and OECD countries.

We applaud all of the Arab and OECD chairs and partners for your commitment in helping to implement a course of action that will help promote stronger reforms to support good governance, enhance investment, and nurture sustainable development throughout the region. Only when the resolve and push to reform comes from within does reform have a chance of succeeding.

The commitments that all the regional G*f*D partners have made since the initiative was launched last year in the Dead Sea, along with complementary commitments found in the Tunis Declaration and the UN Convention Against Corruption, provide a useful step down an important path for the region and a model for all nations as they seek to move forward in this area. We urge States that have not already done so to consider ratifying the Convention as soon as possible.

We very much appreciate recent commitments leaders in Egypt and other Arab governments have manifested to confront corruption head on and to prosecute the corrupt irrespective of their positions. We need to have a frank and common understanding that an important measure of success in fighting corruption is enforcing anticorruption laws and regulations, and arresting, prosecuting, and convicting corrupt officials. Nobody can be above the law. For its part, the United States will continue to work with committed partners to deny safe haven to corrupt officials and prevent them from enjoying the fruits of their corruption.

The key to fighting corruption is political resolve. The GfD Initiative focuses on developing or strengthening systems and tools related to improving transparency in civil service, regulatory reform, the governance of public finance, public service delivery, the role of the judiciary and enforcement, and empowerment of civil society and a free media. We need to be clear-eyed in understanding that those initiatives are important, but only so far as political will to fight corruption and improve governance underpins them.

As President George W. Bush conveyed in his message delivered to delegates last year at the Dead Sea G*f*D Summit, the United States very much supports this initiative and will continue to assist committed Arab leaders who are championing the fight against corruption, implementing public governance reforms, strengthening an independent judiciary, and working with civil society. The

fight against transnational organized crime and terrorism is also a critical area in our efforts to fight corruption and improve good governance globally.

Working together to address such governance challenges in the Arab world can help us to achieve together the shared aspirations of all people for a better way of life, greater freedoms, and more transparency and accountability in our government. A strong G/D anticorruption agenda is also important for ensuring stability, open markets and free trade, and broadening the circle of prosperity in the region.

The United States - like international organizations such as the OECD and the UNDP - is committed to fostering greater regional cooperation and synergies with the ultimate goal of improving peoples' lives in the region. We are eager to support nations' resolve to fight corruption with technical support through the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), USAID development assistance initiatives, and other US Government programs to strengthen democratic practices, promote the rule of law, build accountable, effective government and judicial institutions, and strengthen the role of free and independent media in society.

Through the G8/BMENA initiative, the United States is also working with its G8 and regional partners to develop an investment task force that will complement and support the progress that is being made in the Governance Pillar. The G8 will continue to lend its support to your efforts.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice sends you her best wishes. As Deputy Secretary Zoellick who will be arriving later today to participate at the WEF event, will also convey, the U.S. Department of State looks forward to our growing partnership with you and to translating our joint resolve on improving governance and fighting corruption into demonstrable actions that result in enduring benefits that fulfill the hopes of our people for greater peace and prosperity.

Thank you.