Initiative on
Governance for Development in Arab Countries

Ministerial Steering Group Meeting

UNDP Statement

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Draft Translation of the Arabic Version

19-20 May 2006
Sharm Elsheikh, Arab Republic of Egypt

Your Excellency, Dr. Ahmed Darwish, Minister of State for Administrative Development of Egypt;
Your Excellency, Dr. Youssef Buttros Ghali, Minister of Finance of Egypt;
Your Excellency, Dr. Fayza Mohamed Abu Elnaga, Minister of International Cooperation of Egypt;
Your Excellencies, the ministers from the Arab countries;
Your Excellency, Ambassador Sichiro Noboru, representative of the Foreign Ministry of Japan;
Your Excellency, Mr. Richard Hiklinger, OECD Deputy Secretary General;
Your Excellencies the participants,

On behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), I am delighted to welcome you in the ministerial meeting of the Steering Group of the initiative on Governance for Development in the Arab countries which is held in Sharm Elsheikh under the generous auspices of the Arab Republic of Egypt.

With the end of the G*f*D's first Phase of stocktaking, during which a thorough analysis was conducted on the situation in the Arab countries concerning the initiative's 6 themes[1], preparations are underway for launching the second phase during which national action plans will be prepared. These plans will be translated into tangible measures and practical applications from which the Arab countries will benefit within the context of enhancing the principles of partnership, transparency, accountability and rule of law.

In the Dead Sea Conference in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, where the initiative was launched, the UNDP committed itself to support the theme 4 (public service delivery, public-private partnership and regulatory reform), the theme 5 (role of the judiciary and enforcement), and the theme 6 (citizens, civil society and public sector reform).

More than 15 Arab countries participated in the activities of the above three themes. Twenty-six (26) national reports were accomplished; these came from 11 countries; namely, Jordan, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, and Yemen.

The following are the achievements of G*f*D Phase I:

First, at the level of the role of the UNDP and the successful relationship established with the Arab countries, the sponsoring, funding industrialized countries, and the OECD.

Second, at the level of the contributions to promoting good governance and development in the entire region.

UNDP Role in Implementing the Initiative

1 1) Civil service and integrity; 2) E-Government and administrative simplification; 3) Governance of public finance; 4) Public service delivery, public-private partnership and regulatory reform; 5) Role of the judiciary and enforcement; 6) Citizens, the civil society and the public sector reform.

After launching the Governance for Development in the Arab Region (G*f*D) initiative, the UNDP has enhanced the political and technical support of the activities to be achieved, which were launched following the first meeting of the Steering Group. For 15 months, the UNDP has been providing support to the participating countries by:

1. Organizing conferences and workshops.
2. Providing guidance and support to the working groups in the participating Arab countries.
3. Engaging regional and international experts.
4. Facilitating communication among all the parties participating in the initiative.
5. Preparing reference and guiding documents such as a template for analysis of national reports (the 4th theme); a manual for preparing the national reports (the 5th theme); and two analytical frameworks; one for the citizens' participation in the public sector reform and the other for the civil society's participation in the public sector reform (the 6th theme).

As a result of this support, a successful work relationship was established which brought together the UNDP working team and experts, the representatives of the Arab countries participating in the themes of the initiative, and the representatives and experts of the sponsoring, funding industrialized countries, particularly, the USA, France and the UK. This successful relationship has led to effective exchange of experiences and ideas and prepared the ground for cooperation in the future for improving the governance of the public institutions for the benefit of the citizen and development.

Overview of the Achievements of G*f*D Phase I

The main objective of this initiative is to launch an integrated process aimed at providing an all-embracing view of how institutional reform can be managed. This can be achieved by building on the accumulated regional and international experiences while engaging all the groups of the society and all the parties concerned with this process of modernization and development.

The first step is to provide the appropriate context for this process. Hence, the 1st phase of the initiative has sought to achieve the following:

1. Build partnership with the Arab countries by holding meetings and workshops (11 meetings and workshops were held + 8 missions were undertaken at 8 Arab countries). During these meetings, workshops and visits, the countries confirmed their political will to engage in the activities of the initiative.
2. Build up knowledge and gather information through the national reports, which were completed by the assistance of national experts and committees (26 national reports). The reports took stock of the situation on the ground in each country and analyzed their needs in the light of the national priorities and the achieved development in these priorities so far.
3. Build a network of experts bringing together more than 25 experts from different Arab countries engaged in the 4th, 5th and 6th themes of the initiative.
4. Build a network of specialized national committees in 10 Arab countries; namely, Jordan, UAE, Bahrain, Tunisia, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, and

Yemen. These committees comprise ministers from the above countries and high-ranking public officials.

It may be useful to review the achievements of each theme of the initiative from the perspective of enhancing the principles of good governance and encouraging the good practices in this connection.

The 4th theme, chaired by the Republic of Tunisia and co-chaired by the UK, addressed public service delivery, public-private partnership and regulatory reform. The focus of the 4th theme was placed on enhancing the principles of transparency and accountability with the purpose of delivering effective and high quality public services. The activities of this theme are also intended to improve the response of the public service institutions to the needs of the citizens in the light of the recent developments such as globalization, open market policy, technological progress, etc. In addition, the private sector was engaged in this process because of the important role it plays in the economy today and for the need to promote this role in the Arab countries.

The 5th theme, chaired by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, focused on the role of judiciary and enforcement of court judgments. The purpose of this theme was to enhance the rule of law by improving the capability of the judiciary to develop their methods of operation and build their capacities. This can be achieved by training, exchange of experiences, sharing of knowledge and successful experiences in the Arab region, etc. The activities of this theme are also designed to activate and improve the enforcement of court judgments, create closer relationship between the judges and the litigants, and facilitate access to the legal and judicial information.

The focus of the 6th theme, chaired by the Republic of Lebanon and co-chaired by the European Union, was placed on the role of the citizens and civil society in the public sector reform. The activities of this theme are designed to enhance the principle of participation by conducting in-depth studies about the role of the civil society and the citizens in reforming the public sector and by strengthening networking among all the concerned entities. Assessment was conducted on the participation by the civil society in the public sector reform and the possibility for improving its role in drafting the public policies and providing the public services.

The activities carried out within the context of the above three themes were channeled to enhance and promote the good practices for institutional administration; i.e. transparency, accountability, rule of law, and participation. Regional ownership was at the core of the activities of this theme. Indeed, the participating Arab countries proved their commitment and serious desire to invest and employ the experiences and resources that were made available by this initiative and the networks that were strengthened over the last 15 months.

Role of the initiative in the modernization, development and reform process in the Arab region

As explained above, by focusing on modernizing and improving the institutional administration in the Arab countries, the initiative seeks to bring the administrative apparatus and its methods of operation closer to the citizen and make it more

responsive to his needs within a context of transparency, free access to information, and well-informed analysis.

This goes in line with the will of the Arab countries themselves, which they expressed in Tunis Declaration issued from the 16th Summit held in Tunis in May 2004. The reform process has already begun, as serious steps were taken in more than one country. However, there is still a need to support these steps.

Thus, the initiative was geared in its activities and mechanisms to complete and enhance the efforts of the Arab countries themselves to develop and modernize their administrative apparatuses. In doing this, the initiative has not created cross-cutting tracks that would reduce the required momentum for making the process of the administrative reform a success. Indeed, the administrative reform is no longer needed at the national and regional levels but also at the international level in the light of globalization, open market policy, and the achieved technological progress.

With the GfD initiative approaching its second phase, the UNDP reconfirms its determination to seek in cooperation with the OECD to employ the regional and international experiences and the available methods of support for the benefit of the Arab countries. Our ultimate goal is to accelerate the pace of modernization and development, which has already begun and achieved good results in several countries as revealed in the national reports of the 1st phase of the initiative.

I seize this opportunity to thank the participating Arab countries which did not spare any effort to make the activities of this initiative successful. I hope that this cooperation will continue to achieve more progress in the modernization and development process. I also thank the funding countries which provided support to the UNDP, particularly, the USA, France, and Japan for their efforts to make this initiative a success.