REPORT BY THE OECD/UNDP SECRETARIAT OF THE INITIATIVE

OUTCOMES OF THE FIRST STEERING GROUP MEETING OF THE INITIATIVE ON GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN ARAB COUNTRIES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OECD/UNDP 27-28 APRIL 2005 MADRID, SPAIN

At the invitation of the Spanish Government, the first meeting of the Steering Group of the Initiative on Good Governance for Development (GfD) in Arab Countries was held in Madrid on 27-28 April 2005. This was the first important step towards the implementation of the Initiative that was formally launched at the Dead Sea conference, 6-7 February 2005. The conference was sponsored by H.M. King Abdullah the II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and attended by heads of government, ministers and civil society representatives from Arab countries and from OECD countries.

The meeting in Madrid was hosted and opened by the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos. Mr. Fernando Ballestero, Permanent Representative of Spain to the OECD, chaired the meeting and played a crucial role in its preparation.

Participants were high-level representatives of the six Arab countries chairing the Thematic Working Groups of the Initiative, including the State Minister for Economic and General Affairs from Morocco, Mr. Rachid Talbi El Alami, the Minister for Administrative Development from Tunisia, Mr. Zuhair M'Daffar, the Minister of State for Government Performance of Jordan, Mr. Salaheddin Al-Bashir and Mr. Nabil Al Yousuf, Deputy Director, Executive office, Dubai (United Arab Emirates) as well as representatives from Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. All participants confirmed the strong political commitment and ownership of their governments for the successful implementation of the initiative.

The presence of all OECD co-chairs to this Initiative coming from Canada, France, Italy, Korea, Netherlands, Spain, Turkey, UK, US, and the European Commission reflected the partnership engagement that has been created with their Arab counterparts. The Arab League and the World Bank provided a further link to the ongoing reform efforts in the region.

Key Results of the Steering Group meeting

I Next Milestone: Endorsement at political level of Strategic Action Plans until Spring 2006

Arab countries committed to undertaking the activities necessary to complete the first phase of stock taking of the Initiative - a thorough analysis of key policy issues, reform approaches as well as challenges and barriers related to the six themes of the Initiative. This would be the basis for preparing the next milestone of the Initiative: the definition of and commitment to strategic action plans including a range of pilot projects at the national level to be presented at the Initiative Conference planned for the Spring of 2006.

In view of the preparation of this milestone

- Egypt offered to host the second Steering Group meeting in early December 2005 and extended an invitation to host a Ministerial GfD Conference in 2006;

- The Arab chairs declared their will to host the first round of the respective regional Working Group meetings between June and September 2005;

- It was envisaged that the second and eventually the third round of Working Group meetings would be held prior to the Ministerial GfD Conference;

- OECD chairing countries will be supporting the working groups with policy know-how and will work closely with Arab chairs in preparing the Working Group meetings;

II Agreement of policy issues to be dealt with by the Thematic Working Groups

Participating countries agreed on the thematic structure of policy issues that the six regional Working Groups will be dealing with. There was a strong call for a coherent, cross-cutting approach and for close communication between the Working Groups, in order to allow for synergies, interaction and knowledge-sharing between them. Agreement was reached that Thematic Working Group IV chaired by Tunisia will handle: Public Service Delivery, Public-Private Partnerships and Regulatory Reform. This Theme is co-chaired by the UK, with support from Italy and Canada specifically on regulatory reform. The OECD Secretariat was invited to work with the UNDP to provide technical support to Working Group IV. The Working Group chaired by Dubai and co-chaired by Italy and Korea will therefore focus exclusively on E-government and administrative simplification (see table below).

It was also decided that Canada together with Tunisia would chair the meeting for Arab countries to be held in Paris in September 2005, back-to-back with the meeting of the OECD Working Party on Regulatory Management. The OECD Secretariat will provide technical support for this event.

III Working Methods and Organisational Structure of the Initiative

The participating countries agreed on the working methods and on the organisational structure of the initiative. This includes:

- The establishment of a "National Coordination Committee" in each committed country to ensure that work on all themes of the Initiative will take a whole-of-government approach and be the contact point in each country to facilitate communication among all participating countries. Some progress has already been achieved in this respect with some countries operating on this basis.

- The confirmation of the set-up of regional Thematic Working Groups in order to ensure an effective and results-oriented regional policy dialogue geared to achieving reform at the national level.

- The invitation of Arab chairs to other Arab countries to establish national working groups to deal with the different themes of the Initiative and to set up their own national co-ordination structure in order to allow for achieving a whole-of-government approach in their national reform actions.

- Financial support by OECD and UNDP for holding the *regional* Thematic Working Group meetings is to be provided within the framework of the available financial resources of the Initiative. In this context it was noted that the Initiative's resources have so far been committed or paid in only partially. Arab countries hosting meetings would cover the cost of local logistics (for example meeting venue and local secretarial support).

- The election of Dr. Salah Al-Bashir, Minister for Government Performance of Jordan and Dr. Ahmed Darwish, Minister of State for Administrative Development of Egypt, and Mr. Seiichiro Noboru, Ambassador, Japan, as chairs and co-chair of the Steering Group.

- The proposition that the Steering Group chairs would visit OECD countries and Arab countries in view of promoting the initiative including its funding needs.

Updated overview on the Country Chairs and Co-Chairs of the Working Groups

Thematic Working Group	Arab Country Chair	OECD Country Co-Chairs
1. Civil service and Integrity	Morocco	Spain, Turkey
2. E-Government and Administrative Simplification	Dubai (UAE)	Italy, Korea
3. Governance of Public Finance	Egypt	Netherlands, United States
4. Public Service Delivery, PPP and regulatory reform	Tunisia	United Kingdom, Italy and Canada
5. Role of the Judiciary and Enforcement	Jordan	United States, France
6. Civil society and Media	Lebanon	EC