Welcoming remarks by Ms. Christine McNab
UNDP Resident Representative
United Nations Development Programme

First Regional Meeting on the
"Role of the Judiciary and Law Enforcement Theme"

Your Excellency Dr Abed Shakhanbeh, Minister of Justice and Chair of the Role of the Judiciary and Law Enforcement Theme

Your Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honor for me to be here today in my capacity as UNDP Resident Representative in Jordan, and address you on this special event which comes within the framework of the Governance for Development Initiative. This initiative was declared by the Heads of Arab Delegation in the Conference on "Good Governance for Development in the Arab Countries last February 2005 at the Royal Convention Centre on the shores of the Dead Sea.

As you are all aware, the Government of Jordan was selected to coordinate the working group on the Role of the Judiciary and Enforcement within the Arab Region jointly with the USA and France with cooperation from UNDP-Good Governance for Development in the Arab Countries Regional Programme, POGAR.

This initiative has a principle objective of strengthening the capacity of the Arab countries to design and implement policies of public governance reform that creates an enabling environment conducive to development and growth through a focused, comprehensive and inclusive process.

This initiative also provides a forum that focuses on building knowledge on good governance, on enhancing the capacity to address the growing challenges of globalization, and on building networks at the national and regional levels to sustain the process of policy reform.

In 1998, the United Nations Secretary General stated in his report to the general assembly that "good governance is perhaps the single most important in eradicating poverty and promoting development". Two years later, the world leaders adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which embodied an unprecedented international consensus outlining a common vision of good governance for development.

In 2004, The Arab Human Development Report presented a persuasive and detailed case for far-reaching legal and political reform aimed at fortifying the institutional foundation of freedom .

Most policy makers recognize the importance of the rule of law and a well functioning legal system as a central element for good governance. Despite this, not enough is done in practice to relate the justice sector with policies designed to tackle poverty and promote economic development. In other words, we have not yet made the necessary intellectual effort to link what

we do in the area of support to judicial reform to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

For poor people, living on less than two dollars a day, access to justice is a mirage. In principle, in most countries, there is universal access to justice. In practice, the poor are excluded. Not being able to exert their legal rights can be a contributory cause of their poverty. A strategic approach to the justice sector therefore needs to keep in focus the challenge of expanding the access of the poor and disadvantaged to all institutions that can make difference to their well-being, including access to courts.

Jordan is implementing the strategy and program of action through the Ministry of Justice with the objective "To improve the overall performance of the judicial system in Jordan, enhance its role as an enabler for civic society and national competitiveness while maintaining its independence". The judicial reform has five pillars which together make up the Judicial Upgrade Strategy. They are:

- enhance the efficiency of the court system,
- reduce legal transaction costs for citizens and businesses by upgrading the court system,
- strengthen the courts' autonomy and impartiality,
- enhance the training of lawyers and judges, and
- establish an integrated information system network.

If this strategy is implemented, it can enhance the opportunities, security and empowerment of the citizens of Jordan.

In its endeavor to support the implementation of the Judicial Upgrade Strategy, UNDP has provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Justice through the Regional Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR). At the same time, negotiations are taking place between UNDP Jordan and the Ministry of Justice to explore a programme of cooperation which will provide local support to the implementation of the strategy.

Judicial Reform is always a complicated process, and the connected law enforcement theme will be an additional challenge. Today's meeting is expected to achieve major steps in the implementation of the Governance for Development Initiative, including the adoption of the thematic work plan and clarification of the obligations and commitment of each participating country. Moreover, today's meeting is expected to launch the implementation of the activities that fall under the judicial pillars in each country.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all success in this enterprise. I am looking forward to reading about the outcomes of this meeting, and also to the continuing cooperation between the Ministry of Justice and the UNDP Country Office in Jordan.

Thank you.