

Initiative on Good Governance for Development (GfD) in the Arab Countries:

Background, Objectives of the GfD Initiative and Expected Outcomes

The ideas for the Initiative began in a meeting of experts and senior representatives of different governments in September 2003 in Beirut sponsored by the Lebanese Ministry of Civil Service and the assistance of UNDP-POGAR and OECD. This was followed by a similar meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, in February 2004¹. It is in that meeting that the choice of the six themes was settled. A third meeting of experts and senior officials took place at the end of April 2004 in Rabat, Morocco. The decision on country Thematic Coordinators was made during this meeting on the basis of the countries own willingness to undertake the responsibility of coordinating all activities related to their respective theme. Accordingly, the following countries and their themes were indicated:

Theme I: Civil Service and Integrity, Morocco.

Theme II: Theme III: E-Government, Administrative Simplification and Regulatory Reform, Dubai².

Theme III: Governance of Public Resources, Egypt.

Theme IV: Role of the Judiciary and Legal Enforcement, Jordan.

Theme V: Civil Society and Media, Lebanon.

Theme VI: Public Service Delivery and Public Private Partnership, Tunisia.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan declared its sponsorship of the Initiative. Two Jordanian Ministers³ visited a number of Arab States to seek the support of the highest authorities for the Initiative and its component themes and invite them to a preparatory Ministerial meeting in Amman, Jordan in September 2004. They also visited OECD Secretariat in Paris for the same purpose. The ministerial meeting took place in September 2004 and the participating Ministers, senior diplomats and government representatives endorsed the Initiative and its six themes and called upon UNDP and OECD to provide technical support.

The emphasis on reform and modernization of Arab administration expressed in the Declaration of the May 2004 Arab Summit in Tunis and the Alexandria Declaration for Reform⁴ were both an important impetus for the Initiative, a confirmation of its objective and the need and value of the work to be done in the framework of the Initiative by committed Arab States. Through its focus on policy dialogue and joint programming for development, the Initiative also draws on the Barcelona process and its objective of

¹ Countries that participated in the preparatory phase included: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

² At the end of the Dead Sea Conference, the partners decided to shift the responsibility for part of theme II, "*Regulatory Reform*", from Dubai to Tunisia, for purposes of thematic affinity and consistency. The Government of Tunisia has accepted this transfer.

³ The Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Sector Reform.

⁴ Alexandria Declaration, March 2004. Final statement of "Arab Reform Issues: Vision and Implementation".

establishing in the Mediterranean basin an area for exchange and cooperation to ensure peace, stability and prosperity.

To build on the above, UNDP-POGAR provided assistance to the Jordanian Ministry of Justice for holding several meetings with the diplomatic missions in Jordan representing the Arab and OECD countries to keep them abreast of developments and prepare for the Dead Sea conference. In the meantime, the OECD Secretariat obtained the Council's unanimous endorsement of the Initiative as well as its approval of the budget estimates of 9.435 million Euros for the overall cost of the programme with OECD and UNDP sharing equally the planned expenditures for the three-year duration of implementation. The OECD Secretariat also obtained the approval of a number of OECD countries to act as direct partners with Arab Thematic Coordinators as indicated below:

Theme I: Spain with Morocco.

Theme II: The Netherlands with Egypt.

Theme III: South Korea and Italy with Dubai.

Theme IV: The United States and France with Jordan.

Theme V: The European Union with Lebanon.

Theme VI: The United Kingdom with Tunisia.

It is expected that other OECD countries would subsequently join these partnerships.

Objectives of the Initiative:

The principal objective of the Initiative is to ensure sustainable social and economic development through improving the management of human resources in the civil service, enhancing integrity, transparency and accountability in the delivery of public services and strengthening the institutional capacity for effective economic governance and efficient management of public resources.

The judicial reform and enhancement of national reinforcement capacity are necessary components of good governance and an essential condition for attracting local and international investments. Establishing strong partnerships between private and public sectors and strengthening the role of the civil society enhance public participation in policy formulation and ensure effective policy implementation. The reform of regulatory policies, the reengineering of administrative processes to simplify and codify them and the use of modern information technology through e-government system increase government effectiveness, increase transparency and enhance accountability. Strengthening the role of the media is another means of increasing participation, enhancing private control of public affairs and keeping the public better informed. The interdependence of all themes is evident.

The Initiative is designed to achieve these objectives. The key factor of the Initiative is its "regionality and ownership", a regional Arab Initiative driven by Arab countries. This facilitates joint work in the Arab region as well as enhances the need to look inward at what needs to be done in the light of what was planned and what was achieved in the past

to better prepare the future. It allows for continuity, in a structured manner, with monitoring progress and comparing achievements. It also allows for joint problem solving through continuous contact and discussions among participating Arab countries. The themes represent both a horizontal approach for cross regional exchange, as well as a vertical approach for depth of analysis and improved activity design and effective implementation at national level to achieve the objectives of comprehensive reform.

The novel approach is the partnership of committed Arab countries with committed OECD member countries. This helps transfer knowledge and experience and solves problems through cooperation among practitioners and provides for continuity of such transfer and policy dialogue in the framework of the Initiative and beyond. This approach mobilizes high level expertise from OECD countries, as opposed to dependency on commercial consultants. Senior practitioners who are intimately familiar with the difficulties and pitfalls of policy reform and change management and who have gone through different phases of reform will share their know how with their Arab counterparts.

Arab countries vary in the degree of advancement in their reform programmes, but are all united in the necessity of accelerating the pace of reform and on the need to work together, to set benchmarks to be achieved to exchange experience and increase the value of lessons gained. There are several Arab country initiatives and projects related to the different topics under the six themes of the Initiative, the objective is to take all of these into consideration in a coordinated manner without duplicating activities and multiplying efforts.

The Initiative therefore, supports and energizes ongoing national efforts with the support of international and regional partners. It also supports rather than duplicate bilateral programmes and focuses on policy dialogue for reform. In this sense the Initiative contributes to coordination of different national, regional, bilateral and international programmes and enhances the process of exchange of expertise and cooperation to achieve regional development and prosperity.

Expected Outcomes:

At the end of the planned three-year implementation period, the following are the main expected outcomes and results of the work programme:

1. An improved legal environment for active public participation in policy formulation and effective implementation through public private partnership.
2. Strengthened mechanism for policy analysis and for monitoring and evaluating policy implementation and impact on social and economic development.

3. Improved policy coordination and effective cooperation between the three branches of government with strengthened capacity for law enforcement and efficient management of justice.
4. Effective economic governance and growth and better management of public resources with increased integrity, transparency and accountability.
5. Increased role of civil society and media organizations to foster policy dialogue and monitor policy implementation.
6. Improved management of human resources and increased institutional capacity for good governance and progress in modernizing public institutions.
7. Sustainable mechanism that facilitates policy dialogue and exchange of knowledge and experience among Arab countries for increased integration to accelerate economic and social development.
8. Sustainable mechanism that facilitates exchange of experience and transfer of knowledge between Arab and OECD countries.
9. Effective management of development initiatives supported by international, regional and bilateral resources.

Outcomes and results would be monitored and measured regularly through a built-in system of monitoring, both internally at the country level and externally at the regional level. Each theme will devise an appropriate mechanism for measuring progress and results evaluation.