

**Initiative on Good Governance for Development (GfD) in the Arab Countries:
Conclusions and recommendations of the thematic panel's meetings convened
during the Dead Sea Conference, 6-7 February 2005.**

**Theme Six
Citizens, Civil Society and Public Sector Reform in the Arab Region**

Participants discussed key issues and agreed on the following recommendations in each area:

I. The Media

1. Government institutions must open up to the media for facilitating access to information and creating grounds for accountability.
2. The concepts of freedom, rule of law and participation must be turned into practical methods, thus, allowing the citizens to effectively participate in the policy formulation and decision processes.
3. As the role of the media in the Arab region is not clear and they do not enjoy sufficient independence, there is a need for improving the quality of the media in order to create a credible press whose function is to find facts and inform the public.
4. Press institutions and mass media must improve the criteria and performance of their human resources by providing training in the ethics, code of conduct and other tools necessary for raising the level of professionalism and credibility.
5. The media cannot work alone; it needs the participation of the civil society. The role of the media should not be limited to merely providing entertainment but should be extended to provide high-quality information of value to the community.
6. There is a need to formulate an integral strategy for developing the media in the Arab region and fill in the legislative and control gaps to ensure the independence of the media.

II. The Civil society

1. Enhancing the role of the civil society in reforming public institutions requires establishing a partnership based on mutual trust between civil society organizations and the government. This can be achieved through dialogue and trust building for allowing easy access to information to inform the public and strengthen participatory democracy.

2. The civil society and the State have a role in guiding the citizens; modernizing and enforcing relevant legislative reforms are needed. Constitutional amendments where necessary should be introduced to recognize and legitimize the role of civil society organizations.
3. Training and skills development in management and public outreach are needed to enhance the role of civil society organizations and strengthen its partnership with public and private agencies.