

## **Initiative on Good Governance for Development (G/D) in the Arab Countries:**

### **Theme 2: E-Government and Administrative Simplification<sup>1</sup>**

A number of Arab countries, for example Dubai, Morocco, Egypt and Jordan, have started to develop and implement policies on e-government, which is an important tool that can help to promote transparency and accountability and contribute, at the same time, to improving competitiveness. Successful e-government relates to the overall governance framework and requires that reform is undertaken not only at the level of information technology but in the entire environment that determines the local governance culture.

Arab countries are also increasing efforts for administrative simplification. One of the most common complaints raised by business and citizens, both in Arab as well as in OECD countries, is the quantity and complexity of government formalities and paperwork. The costs imposed on the economy as a whole are significant and red tape is identified as a key barrier for economic development. In response to these challenges, governments have increasingly focused on reviewing and simplifying the bureaucratic burden, but there is a need to improve the effectiveness of policies that have been initiated.

#### **Challenges**

- How to promote e-government in view of a social and urban/rural divide to ICT?
- How to ensure that e-government does not become a stand-alone process and not part of a cross cutting and strategic modernization process of the government?
- How to deal with privacy as well as security issues.
- How to address the heavy financial implications of investments in e-government?
- How to overcome inter-ministerial barriers to a whole-of-government approach to e-government, as well as the fear the e-government will initiate an avalanche of subsequent organizational changes?
- How to deal with the reluctance of administrations to provide clear public information on their services, as a precondition to set up those services on the net?
- How to overcome technical/organizational difficulties related to the central/local interface.
- How to achieve interoperability and openness of system, in view of providers tending to offer captive technological solutions?
- How to overcome administrative barriers and red tape that are deeply engrained in many administrations?

#### **Policy priorities and actions**

- Building political commitment at the highest level.
- Building a business case for e-government as a tool for wider reform.
- Setting up clear responsibilities and leadership for e-government projects.
- Providing a viable strategy, with clear objectives and implementation plans.
- Providing the appropriate regulatory framework for e-government.

- Providing training and upgrading human resources as a precondition for successful e-government.
- Manage co-operation between the public and private sectors to implement e-government and to widespread use.
- Assessing costs and benefits.
- Managing financial and technical resources: Ensuring that public administrations are equipped to become a driver of change.
- Setting up control systems for e-government implementation
- Setting up e-government evaluation and measurement tools

### **Promoting policies to simplify administrative burdens:**

- Formulate and implement policies to avoid unnecessary administrative procedures.
- Use participative methods to administrative simplification and to the extent possible, use one stop shops.
- Make use of information technology (see e-government above).
- Produce clear guidelines on administrative regulations.

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<sup>1</sup> *This Framework for Policy Dialogue* includes priority issues gleaned from international experience. This is not an exclusive listing of issues; countries may change or add their own priority issues. The purpose is to serve as a reference point, a guide for policy discussion. Working Groups in Arab countries may find them useful as they embark on the implementation of activities related to the six themes of the GfD Programme. The “Regulatory Reform” has been moved to theme 4 based on a decision taken by the Steering Committee in its first meeting in Madrid in April 2005.