

OPENING REMARKS

Aart de Geus, OECD Deputy Secretary General

First meeting of the Taskforce of MENA Stock Exchanges
for Corporate Governance

5 July 2011

Distinguished participants,

- It gives me a great pleasure to open the first meeting of the Taskforce of MENA Stock Exchanges for Corporate Governance. The high caliber of the participants here today will no doubt generate interesting and provocative discussions, on improving governance arrangements for listed companies.
- Let me say a few words about the co-operation between MENA countries and the OECD and the impact of the Arab Spring.
- The MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development has for the last 6 years been a partnership of equals between MENA countries and the OECD growing to cover a wide range of issues: from creating attractive investment environments to the governance of public finance.
- Following what is now known as the Arab Spring, Egypt and Tunisia are embarking on far reaching political reforms. They are in the process of developing the economic policies that best suit them to emerge from this period of unrest. The OECD, based on the proven policy experience of its Members and partners, is helping these countries. We are ready to provide advice and support the authorities in MENA countries as they confront the challenges of reform and bringing about more inclusive growth to their citizens.
- These reforms should also address weaknesses in the corporate governance framework. Better corporate governance is a fundamental component of business and public sector integrity. Policymakers, not only in Egypt and Tunisia, but across the region have taken notice of the governance failures in a range of companies: family-owned firms; state-owned enterprises; and listed firms. The OECD can leverage its longstanding cooperation with MENA countries through the MENA-OECD Working Group on Corporate Governance to support policy reforms related to corporate governance of listed, state-owned and privately held companies.
- How can we help? Let me give you a few examples. The OECD Principles of Corporate Governance have served as a basis for many codes in the region. The OECD has accompanied a number of MENA jurisdictions in developing their national corporate governance codes. The Secretariat is currently supporting such efforts in Morocco, Lebanon and Egypt. We welcomed Saudi Arabia and Morocco to the last meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee and hope to do so again in the future.
- Let me close now by thanking the Turkish government, especially the Capital Markets Board and the Istanbul Stock Exchange for their support of this timely initiative.
- I wish you a successful meeting and would now like to give the floor to Adrian Blundell Wignall, Special Advisor to the Secretary General on Financial Markets and Deputy Director of the OECD's Directorate for Financial and Enterprises Affairs.