

Good Governance for Development in the Arab countries, Amman, 6-7 February 2005. Speech by OECD Secretary General Donald J. Johnston

07/02/2005 - Speech by OECD Secretary General Donald J. Johnston

Your Majesty, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure to be here at this most significant and historic event. On behalf of the OECD and its member countries, I would like to congratulate Your Majesty and the Ministers of your Government for your great vision and leadership in turning this promising idea into a reality. Our thanks go as well to the Prime Ministers and Ministers here today for inviting the OECD and UNDP to support your governments as you carry forward this ambitious initiative.

The goal is clear. Nations from all parts of the world are coming to the conclusion that effective, efficient, fair and responsive governments are an essential basis for development of our economies and societies. The fact that so many leaders have gathered here today is a dramatic demonstration of the desire of Arab governments to work together to improve governance to raise the standard of living of their citizens.

The OECD itself has its origins in just such a commitment, when leaders of European countries, former enemies as well as allies, came together through the Marshall Plan in a monumental effort to rebuild a continent destroyed by war. They found that through cooperation, they could accomplish far more than they could as nations acting alone – and that the successes of their neighbours were their successes as well. They established a pattern of cooperation which we follow to this day. Policy officials come together to address common problems, identify solutions, implement action plans and monitor results.

This is the agenda for this new programme. Its essential ingredients are a commitment by countries in the region to take up the challenge of leadership and ownership and to ensure that this initiative produces concrete results. Our responsibility as the OECD is to support this important work, to provide our expertise and to incorporate this regional network into the broader network of policy officials addressing the same critical issues.

Under the leadership of the Arab countries, this is an inclusive initiative. Along with the OECD and the UNDP, we have the Arab League, the World Bank, the European Union, and a number of organizations working in the region, including those from the private sector and civil society. The framework created by this initiative is flexible, and while its primary focus is formulation and implementation of the most effective policies, it can complement and build upon the very important bilateral and multilateral assistance programmes that are supporting development in the region.

Your Majesty, we welcome your insightful and inspirational ideas. We are honoured to be here today and to be asked to provide the experience and support of OECD countries to our Arab partners.