



The Good Governance for Development in Arab Countries Initiative

Steering Group Meeting at Ministerial Level

**Opening Remarks by Ms. Gun-Britt Andersson,
Ambassador, Sweden
Co-Chair of the GfD Steering Group**

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[Welcome] Thank you very much, Mr. Abdellatif. As co-chair of the GfD Steering Group, I also take great pleasure in welcoming you all to our meeting today. The OECD MENA UNDP cooperation is still a young venture in a region marked by its long history as cradle of civilizations. During its first three years it has rooted itself in this ancient ground as a new useful approach towards promoting investment and good governance for development. That is an achievement.

Encouraging and supporting reforms of the public sector and governance in order to improve the environment for social, economic and human development in the Arab region is the mission. To accomplish this, here as elsewhere in the world, the public sector in its roles both as regulator and sometimes provider has to perform well, be transparent and accountable.

OECD has over the years through the particular working methods of peer learning and peer envy help its membership of democratic market economies to enhance economic growth and improve living standards for all. I have been impressed to note how political leaders and practitioners in the Arab region have embraced the OECD approach of promoting reform through best practices, evidence based analysis, mutual appraisal and evaluation. I hope that we now can see the possibility that the rough environment for sustainable development caused by political problems will soon be removed by a working peace process. Then the region can fully concentrate on development. Today we can see it as our task to position the region for taking full advantage of present and new opportunities by agreeing a new phase for our Governance for Development Program.

The new program has been developed in consultations with partner countries in the region and in full cooperation between OECD and UNDP. There have been bilateral consultations, contributions from working groups and other technical meetings. The orientation that you find in the documents today emerged finally from the **Steering group meeting at technical**

level that Minister Darwish hosted here in Cairo last September. We will present the proposals for the way forward with some detail in the afternoon session.

[The thematic orientation of GfD II] The substantive program of work will build on experience from the first phase and with some new emphasis made by the Arab partners. UNDP will be the main coach for themes relating to the judiciary system and anti corruption work. OECD will have the main role relating to public sector reform in general such as: integrity of the public sector, human resource management, reform of the regulatory environment and management of public expenditure. All together, twelve themes have been identified and for each of them priority areas for work. In many areas concerns are related to the Investment pillar of the Initiative and full cooperation is foreseen where appropriate. UNDP and OECD Secretariat will also align in underpinning the work.

The focus themes are in fact also major concerns for OECD countries as well in terms of governance reform. This thematic orientation will in my view facilitate the inclusion of OECD member states experts and practitioners in the professional networks we wish to see established.

Also based on the stocktaking of experiences we have made, we see four strategic directions as instruments during the next phase. These strategic directions are, in practical terms, a method to assure the effective implementation of the program. This afternoon we will have the opportunity of discussing in depth these strategic directions, that are, as you can consult in the background documentation:

1. Deepening policy dialogue, knowledge and capacity building at the regional level;
2. Fostering peer-advice and partnerships for reform at the national level;
3. Monitoring and measuring modernisation in the judiciary and in the public sector;

4. Anchoring the GfD Initiative in a framework for regional institutions and networks for capacity building and reform;

[Institutional framework of GfD II] The experience of the past three years shows the importance of integrating the participation of the different actors of the initiative in an effective institutional framework: national governments and international organizations. Preliminary discussions suggested that GfD will continue to be well advised by the interaction of the regional structures (Steering Group & Regional Working Groups & National Committees) and permanent structures (OECD Public Governance Committee & OECD/UNDP Secretariat). Regional structures should be the main source of decision on activities and for overseeing implementation of priorities and updating them. The role of the OECD, its Public Governance Committee and its thematic working parties should be to offer opportunities for policy dialogue and help mobilise international expertise and peer advice. National co-ordination committees are equally important in the design for securing Arab country ownership and the good functioning of the initiative. Finally, the OECD/UNDP secretariats should continue to support the functioning of the whole framework and the implementation of activities, hopefully increasingly in cooperation with regional partners.

I want to emphasize the important role of the working groups and their current organisation based in Arab chairs and OECD co chairs. The Working Groups structure has proved effective and successful in the connection of practitioners from Arab and OECD countries and the identification of common challenges and goals. In my view, this structure has important tasks to develop in the new phase by developing terms of reference for concrete action, setting goals and mobilising and maintaining professional networks. Efforts have also to be devoted to the coordination between working groups as many crosscutting issues arise and a substantial number of critical topics are transversal. The search for synergies and

partnerships between working groups will require a strong leadership of the Steering Committee of the network with the support of the OECD and UNDP Secretariat.

The working groups are as a first task now called up onto play a critical role in translating the program of work into a schedule of activities. This could be done through terms of reference for each group. GfD,II and thus the working groups have to pay special attention to the substantive implementation of reform. Our discussions today, your precious input and your experience as managers of the process of governance reform at the highest level will result in a very solid platform to work on during the coming years.

Finally I am pleased to inform that in line with the decision of the OECD council in May this year to continue its support also donors expressed a clear positive interest at a special meeting in Brussels in March. Later today in the discussion here and in the special we will listen carefully to what already committed and potential financial partners will say. The success of GfD II will depend on its ability to mobilise human and organisational capacities but of course also on availability of finance.

[Conclusion] Thank you very much. I now will leave the floor to H.E. Dr. Ahmed Darwish, Minister of State for Administrative Development, Arab Republic of Egypt and Chair of the GfD Steering Group.