

**GOOD GOVERNANCE
FOR DEVELOPMENT
IN ARAB COUNTRIES
INITIATIVE**



Steering Group Meeting at technical level

H.E. Mr. Chris HOORNAERT

Ambassador

Permanent Representative of Belgium to the OECD

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OECD Conference Centre

- I am pleased to be here today and look forward to my new tasks as co-chair of the Good Governance for Development in Arab Countries Initiative. I consider the GfD Initiative as a prototype of successful international co-operation. It is not about providing countries with financial support that create heavy obligations, it is about providing policy advice that will foster progress. In this Initiative the OECD countries have policy experiences to share and this is the main resource of the programme. Good Governance is crucial for any country to stay competitive in a globalised world and common challenges in the global economy call for co-ordinated efforts. Major reforms have been implemented in OECD member and Arab countries in the last two decades to adapt their governance structures in a rapidly changing economic and social environment. The GfD Initiative is a mutually reinforcing initiative: it is opening the door to the work and knowledge of the OECD to Arab countries. At the same time, the OECD is gaining insights on different cultural perspectives and paths of human progress.
- I know that most of the Arab countries around the table today have hosted key regional meetings and thematic seminars, they have undertaken case studies and participated in surveys on common governance priorities and challenges. Policy experts from OECD countries have provided peer advice, participated in missions of the OECD Secretariat, and have hosted, as for example my home country, study missions. A sustainable and very active network of policy practitioners has been built, which reaches far beyond the countries chairing and co-chairing the thematic Working Groups. Your presence today shows how much you all recognise the value added of the regional dialogue and I would like to thank you for your continued support to the Initiative.
- The policy dialogue in the regional Working Groups has proven to provide a unique setting for bringing forth promising ideas for partnerships: Ideas for tailored approaches that build on the pragmatism of practitioners from both Arab and OECD countries and a joint understanding of reforms needed in specific Arab countries. Allow me to appeal to all of us to give to these ideas the backing that they require and deserve.
- OECD countries recognise the value-added of this Initiative: the Initiative is unique in being owned and carried forward by Arab countries and in bringing together practitioners from Arab and OECD countries to exchange on their experiences in the field of public sector management, governance, and the judiciary. The OECD Council agreed on 10 May 2007 to extend the OECD support to the GfD Initiative until the end of 2010 and the strong support from OECD member countries was confirmed on several occasions:
 - at the GfD stakeholders meeting on 5 March 2007 in Brussels, that brought together OECD member country representatives in charge of bilateral and regional co-operation programmes with Arab countries;
 - at the OECD External Relations Committee meeting on 16 April 2007 in Paris;
 - at the Steering Group Meeting at ministerial level on 29 November 2007 in Cairo.
- I am very pleased and honoured to become the new GfD Steering Group co-chair, a position that will allow me to actively participate in this exchange and to shape the outline of the Initiative. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Swedish government for its leading role in the GfD Initiative. I would like to thank in particular, H.E. Ambassador Gun-Britt Andersson for

Sweden's long-lasting and important support to the GfD Initiative. Ambassador Andersson co-chaired the GfD Steering Group since May 2006 and has provided in the exercise of this function strategic guidance to the implementation of the Initiative in 2005-07. Beyond the time of the co-chairmanship, Sweden has also actively shaped the design and co-operation prospects of the Initiative for the period 2008-10. Sweden co-chaired several key meetings of the Initiative, notably the Steering Group Meeting at Ministerial Level on 29 November 2007 in Cairo, a core political milestone for carrying the initiative into its second phase (2008-2010).

- In the immediate future we all have to put special emphasis on ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the GfD Initiative. I intend to coordinate efforts in this regard with your support. Besides, we have to reinforce our commitment to anchor the initiative within the framework of international co-operation programmes in the Arab region, in particular those of the United Nations institutions and the European Union which is strengthening these days its policies regarding the neighbour countries and in particular the Mediterranean region.
- I wish us all a very insightful discussion about the future activities carried out within the thematic Working Groups and regional networks. With your contributions, this Initiative will accelerate its evolution. I will now hand the floor to H.E. Minister Darwish. Thank you very much.