

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



Steering Group Meeting at technical level

Mr. Aart DE GEUS

Deputy Secretary-General

OECD

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OECD Conference Centre

- Thank you Minister Darwish. It is a great pleasure for me to participate in the opening session of the Steering Group Meeting and to welcome you in our new OECD conference centre. The Good Governance for Development in Arab Countries Initiative has grown during the past three and a half years into an important support for national governance reforms in Arab countries. For the OECD this is an important Initiative and a good example of the strong partnerships we have developed with non-member countries around the world.

The OECD and global relations

- As you may know, the OECD is an international organisation that helps governments to improve their policies in order to build a better world economy together. Along the years we developed a common language and built shared solutions to tackle global challenges. Our ambition is to transform globalisation into a more balanced and harmonious process. We do this by sharing governmental experience, by identifying best practices and by providing policy analysis and reliable comparative statistics in virtually all areas of public policy. We are fully convinced of the benefits of multilateral cooperation. Working together is an essential condition to successfully addressing structural issues - like economic growth, education, and social welfare - but also more urgent challenges like climate change, food and water scarcity or international migration; to mention just a few examples.
- We are currently expanding our membership and outreach to respond to the recent transformations in the world economy. We are adapting so as to better reflect an increasingly interdependent world. So we are becoming more global, more inclusive and more plural. OECD member countries share a common feature that they are ready to share with partners: a successful adaptation to the requirements of the globalisation process.
- The MENA Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development plays a key role in this strategy. When in 2005 the Arab governments gathered at the Dead Sea and invited the OECD to support this regional Initiative, we were aware of the importance of this challenge as well as the profound impact of the process, both for the Arab and the OECD countries. The past three years have been an intensive learning process in which we have developed a culture of cooperation and exchange. Hundreds of experts and officials from Arab and OECD countries have addressed together the major challenges of economic development and public sector reform. An unprecedented process of communication, open discussion and exchange has been accomplished during the implementation of the programme of work of the Initiative. This is a major achievement.
- This process of exchange has been mutually beneficial. OECD countries have considerably enriched their understanding of the globalisation process and how other countries and regions perceive the development challenges and their solutions. We are now better equipped to work effectively with the rest of the world and this is in part thanks to this pioneer programme by means of which we have greatly strengthened our links to the Arab region. We know the interest that Arab countries have shown on our methods of work and the instruments we use to enhance national policies with multilateral cooperation. This meeting today is crucial for shaping and carrying forward the Initiative, ensuring that our common background will increase the impact of the Initiative in the process of governance modernisation of the Arab countries.

Public Governance and Political Economy of Reform

- Governance is of course at the core of this process. The OECD has been a pioneer organisation in the recognition of the importance of good governance frameworks for economic and social development. The promotion of good governance is a precondition for economic growth and human development. Governance reform provides the framework within which economic reform can

prosper and the overall reform agenda can gain visibility and credibility. It is also the only way to ensure trust in government and engage citizens in the defence of public interest. Good governance is not a point of arrival, it is a dynamic process that implies a permanent adaptation of the public sector to the emergent needs and the demands of the society. Better public governance is in this sense a process of reform, reform to ensure the positive contribution of the public sector to the economic development and reform to respond to citizens' needs.

- Ensuring the success of reform is a main challenge for public officials. Two elements are key in this direction: broad support for change and strong leadership translating this support into a concrete reform program. The OECD is happy observing that both elements are reinforced by the Good Governance for Development in Arab Countries Initiative: firstly, the regional policy dialogue makes the need for reform visible and the commitment for reform credible; secondly, policy dialogue provides policy makers with the appropriate tools to succeed in their projects of reform.
- We have to be aware that reform in public management is a difficult enterprise for governments. We all know that reforms may have short term costs while benefits are only visible in the long term. Some social groups or individuals can feel penalised by reforms, whereas the vast number of beneficiaries are not aware of the long-term benefits. Therefore it is important to adequately communicate reforms to citizens and to link their implementation to overall political and economic goals. The involvement of civil society organisations and the communication with the media is crucial to achieve better governance results and to implement reforms successfully.
- The Good Governance for Development in Arab countries Initiative is a network of reform oriented policy makers. As public officials dealing on a daily basis with the difficulties and challenges of reform you are in an excellent position to contribute to the global debate on the political economy of reform. I hope that we will have the occasion in the future to jointly address this common problem in a special event concerning the challenges of communicating reform.
- We are sure that your discussion today will successfully contribute to shaping the future directions of this Initiative and ensure its contribution to the successful integration of our countries in the global economy.
- Thank you very much.