GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT (GfD) IN ARAB COUNTRIES INITIATIVE

FROM GfD I TO GfD II: REINFORCING REGIONAL DIALOGUE TO SUPPORT POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND BENCHMARKING

From GfD I …

Since its launch in 2005, the GfD Initiative has assisted Arab and OECD countries in creating and sustaining a unique regional network of policy-makers and practitioners. GfD I (2005-2007) supported a fruitful learning process for both sides and demonstrated the Initiative's vast potential to facilitate cooperation between Arab and OECD countries in the area of governance:

- Dialogue and co-operation between policy-makers have promoted the mutual understanding of national governance policies and a common language for addressing governance issues. Regional projects seek to foster this cooperation by addressing priorities that are common to a number of Arab countries, maximising resources and allowing the development of comparative areas of expertise.
- Stocktaking initiatives and the analysis of national and regional reform priorities have led to a large collection of shared information and knowledge. In particular, Country Action Plans described national agendas for reform and indicated how international cooperation can complement local reform.
- Numerous implementation activities in the past three years have demonstrated the Initiative's potential to reinforce capacities and skills. National coordination teams provided their administrations with a substantial amount of comparative knowledge on governance. The inception of a major impact on public sector and judiciary system performance is being seen.
- With the active support of the UNDP/OECD Secretariat, the GfD Working Groups defined the thematic priorities for the GfD partnership and established practical guidelines for concrete action.

… to GfD II …

The above achievements are not a final result, but should be viewed as an important basis for future work during GfD II (2008-2010) and beyond. GfD II is inspired by a mutual understanding that the Initiative should focus on policy dialogue that furthers the implementation and benchmarking of governance reforms. Implementation of governance reforms is an ongoing process which includes streamlining reforms at national levels and incorporating regional dialogue and capacity building. It also involves active support by partners for local reforms and the creation of regional mechanisms to support reform, (e.g., centres of expertise and specialised networks). Benchmarking permits to link reform to international standards. Therefore, data collection on the judiciary system and the public sector should provide the basis for elaborating regional benchmarks and standards.

The successful implementation of GfD II requires increased mobilisation of human and financial resources. On the one hand, Arab partners are invited to develop inclusive strategies to mobilize human resources within national public institutions and disseminate results to larger numbers of stakeholders in Arab countries. On the

other hand, OECD Member countries have to maintain a high level of commitment in order to facilitate the participation of their officials in GfD activities. The OECD/UNDP Secretariat is invited to develop a joint strategy for resource mobilisation. An important means to further this would be by improving communication amongst donors active in the GfD Initiative and increasing their awareness of the reform projects undertaken by Arab stakeholders. This can also ensure complementarities between the GfD Initiative and existing co-operation programs in the Arab region.

… and beyond

By 2010, the sustainable process of reform supported by GfD should contribute significantly to the progress of governance and human development in the Arab region. Specifically, GfD II's successful implementation can result in expanded knowledge on the part of Arab stakeholders, enhanced legal and institutional frameworks in Arab countries, and improved capacities of the institutions composing both the public sector and the judicial system. Ultimately, it can yield a solid basis for a sustainable and continuous process of modernising regional governance systems in accordance with international standards while addressing national specificities. By 2010, the target achievements that will constitute the strategic directions for future reform include:

- Guidelines, tools, standards and methodologies adapted to the needs of Arab countries, which can be used by policy makers for decision making and policy implementation.
- GfD "know-how" dissemination to different sectors and levels of national administrations through regular capacity building and joint learning activities.
- Peer learning activities based on international reform benchmarks and domestic policy discussions that assess actual reform progress and outline additional practical steps for reform implementation.
- Continued capacity building for government officials through the regional training and expertise centres – recognised regionally as delivering high quality services and policy analysis.
- Progress in the implementation of national and regional anti-corruption policies, including implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).
- Issuing the first series of public sector data and quality indicators. Reliable measurement improves evidence-based decision making at the national level and allows countries to benchmark their achievements through international comparisons.

The GfD approach is considered by governments and donors as a key factor for improving the capacity of Arab States to develop and successfully implement public policies. The strong involvement of donors from OECD and Arab countries will help deepen regional policy dialogue; foster national-level peer-learning; measure and monitor progress achieved; and anchor the GfD achievements in a sustainable framework of regional institutions such as regional centres of expertise and specialised networks.