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Access to education

Dina Kawar, Ambassador, Jordanian Embassy to France

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Dear Friends,

It is a pleasure for me to share with you Jordan's experience in education, its policies and future plans.

Jordan represents a good example in the region where the government has succeeded in adopting sound decisions with credible results. No need to tell you that Jordan has placed education at the center of its development policies as it always identified its human resource as its primary asset: during the last 30 years, Jordanians across the Middle-East have successfully participated to the economic development of emerging regional players, and have therefore brought economic development at home; however, this trend towards education had to be intensified.

Today, obligatory primary education has brought the enrollment rate to 99% for both girls and boys. Enrollment in secondary level is 75%.

As for early childhood education cycle, the statistics are unfortunately still below our objectives. However, in 1994 the education law extended the basic education cycle to include KG.

As for gender equality, tremendous advances have been made. The Millennium Development goals, results of 2003 and 2004 show that enrollment rates consisted of 51% males and 49% females. Jordan is therefore considered as an example in this regard.

Central to the strategy of removing gender barriers to girl education is the employment of female teachers. The empowerment of women has allowed more female employees in basic and secondary school levels.

In 2005, the national agenda guidelines addressed education's need to upgrade the quality of the educational system as one of the pillars of the political development process and reform in the country.

As we all know, that creating democratic institutions requires educating people in order for them to be aware of their political rights and to practice democracy, and Jordan is making efforts in this regard, too, and some upgrading of the quality of the curricula is now under way. Vocational education is of vital importance, especially for a developing country and, keeping this in mind, the government of Jordan has emphasized the need for coordination between universities, vocational education and adequacy of job opportunities in the market.

Jordan recognizes that the development of a high quality labor force is a priority for fostering competitiveness in the global knowledge economy and a good means to fight unemployment.

His Majesty King Abdullah II has recently affirmed that the economic future of Jordan will be found through successful participation in the global knowledge economy, and more particularly in the value-added information technology industries.

In order to achieve this objective, the Ministry of Education has launched an integrated comprehensive two- phase project for educational reform, supported both by the government and foreign donors, mainly the World Bank, the first phase of which is currently under implementation.

This project consists of 4 distinct, yet coherent components which are related to:

- Recognizing the educational policy, objectives, and strategy through governmental and administrative reform.
- Changing the educational programs and practices to achieve learning outputs in harmony with knowledge economy.
- Providing support for good quality learning environment.
- Developing complete readiness for learning through education from the early childhood cycle.

Such an important investment is expected to yield benefits- at the national, institutional and individual levels.

The target population is current and future students enrolled in preschool, basic, and secondary education in the country, focusing particularly on disadvantaged groups. At least, 80 percent of the primary and secondary students will thus have access to safe and adequate school facilities, and at least 70 percent of this group of students will be using online learning portals.

Ladies and gentlemen, we in Jordan are trying our best to build an educational system which focuses on excellence, by investing in human resources, in order to enable them to adapt to, and compete effectively in the knowledge economy age. Investing in our human resources has always been the guarantor of our economic survival. In the future it will be the guarantor of the success of our political reform and the vehicle of integration into the 21st century.

Thank you for your kind attention.