



MENA - OECD INITIATIVE



Outcomes of the MENA-OECD Ministerial Conference and Governance and Business Forums

22 - 23 November 2009 - Marrakech, Morocco

www.oecd.org/mena/ministerial2009



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I. OVERVIEW

The OECD and the MENA region

Launched in 2004 at the request of countries from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the **MENA–OECD Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development** works to help accelerate policy and economic reform in the Middle East and North Africa. The Initiative supports reform efforts in 18 participating MENA countries¹ through peer dialogue and the sharing of good practices between policy makers, private sector and civil society representatives in MENA and OECD countries as well as through assistance in the implementation of policy reform. The Initiative has two pillars: investment and governance. The **MENA-OECD Investment Programme** aims at improving the business climate and focuses on establishing a favourable environment for investment — foreign, regional and domestic — as a driving force for economic growth and employment in the MENA region. The **MENA-OECD Governance Programme** works towards increasing the efficiency, accountability and transparency of the public sector as a pre-condition for a stronger, fairer and cleaner economy.

The 2009 MENA-OECD Ministerial Conference: Main outcomes

The 2009 MENA-OECD Ministerial Conference, held in Marrakech on 23 November 2009, provided an important opportunity for MENA and OECD Ministers to develop coordinated strategies and actions – in the wake of the most severe global crisis in decades – to face the future with a strong private and public sector reform agenda in place.

The MENA-OECD Ministerial Conference was hosted by the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco, the new chair of the Initiative. It was preceded by a Governance Forum, a Business Forum and Women’s Business Leaders Summit, which brought together hundreds of senior business, civil society and government representatives to discuss critical issues for sustainable growth in the region, such as integrity and transparency, skills development, citizens engagement, women’s entrepreneurship and gender policies, responsible business conduct, commercial law reform, financial sector reform, and the role of the media and communication strategies in policy reform.

Specifically, the Marrakech Ministerial Conference delivered the following outputs:

- ✓ ***Adoption of the Marrakech Ministerial Declaration on Investment and Governance;***
- ✓ ***Adoption of Action Plans on Women’s Employment and Entrepreneurship; Programme of Work on Gender Policies, and on Responsible Business Conduct;***
- ✓ ***Adoption of the Regional Charter for Quality in Regulation;***
- ✓ ***Support of the work of the Gender Focus Group and approval of the Programme of Work to build capacities for successful gender policies;***
- ✓ ***Launch of new initiatives: the MENA-OECD Business Council, the MENA 100 Business Plan Competition, the Focus Group on Green Growth and Territorial Development;***
- ✓ ***The MENA-OECD Initiative will increasingly address the rule of law component of governance as a precondition for development for citizens and businesses;***
- ✓ ***Adherence of Morocco to the OECD Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises;***
- ✓ ***Regional policy recommendations and guidelines to enhance the investment climate and public governance reforms.***

¹ Countries participating in the MENA-OECD Initiative: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian National Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

A. Ministers from MENA and OECD countries and heads of delegations adopted the Marrakech Ministerial Declaration on Investment and Governance

Ministers and heads of delegations from 16 MENA and 22 OECD countries together with the European Commission adopted the Marrakech Declaration on Governance and Investment, defining a roadmap for action and reform to be supported by the MENA-OECD Initiative over the coming years. In the Declaration, countries committed to maintain open markets for trade and investment, promote public governance reforms, invest further in education, enhance transparency and fight corruption. Government commitments were reinforced by a set of actions to be supported by the MENA-OECD Programme.

B. Investment Programme New Initiatives and Actions

1. Presentation and adoption of the Women's Entrepreneurship and Employment Action Plan

High-level representatives from MENA and OECD governments and business engaged in a lively and stimulating exchange during the Women Business Leaders Summit to define concrete measures for removing gender-specific obstacles to women's empowerment in the MENA countries. The activation of the MENA-OECD Women's Business Network was strongly supported, notably to carry out the Action Plan on Fostering Women's Entrepreneurship and Employment in the MENA region. The Action Plan calls for stakeholders to:

- *Encourage women's entrepreneurship and employment by creating an enabling business environment;*
- *Facilitate business registration and growth through enhanced access to finance, in particular for women-owned businesses;*
- *Improve economic policy through better gender-disaggregated statistics and indicators;*
- *Facilitate participation in the MENA-OECD Women's Business Network and ensure increased contacts between business networks.*

2. Presentation and adoption of a Declaration and Action Plan on Responsible Business Conduct

The MENA Responsible Business Conduct Forum endorsed the "Declaration on Promoting Responsible Business Conduct in the MENA Region". Egyptian Investment Minister H.E. Mahmoud Mohieldin presented the Declaration to the Ministerial Session on Investment and underlined the need for the MENA region to further recognise the positive impact of responsible business conduct on national and regional business climates and encouraged governments as well as businesses to join the MENA Responsible Business Conduct Forum.

3. Launch of the MENA-OECD Business Council

Launched by the Secretary General at the opening of the Business Forum, the MENA-OECD Business Council aims to provide policy makers with recommendations on reform priorities, strengthen public-private dialogue, and generate new business opportunities in the MENA region. In Marrakech, a number of key senior executives from both MENA and OECD countries came together to define a roadmap for future action for the Business Council and to define potential deliverables of its five Task Forces (Competitiveness, Women's Entrepreneurship and Employment, Responsible Business Conduct, Energy and Infrastructure, Financing).

4. The three regional winners of the MENA 100 Business Plan Competition were announced

Sheikh Mohammed Al Khalifa, CEO of the Economic Development Board of Bahrain, presented the three regional winners of the MENA 100 Competition. The MENA 100 Competition connects the most

innovative entrepreneurs in the region with financing and provides coaching to support the development of local enterprises. The winners included companies from the automotive, health, and IT sectors. The publication “Enterprising MENA” was also tabled; it is a direct output of the MENA 100 Business Plan Competition, and includes the top business plans for six MENA countries (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and the UAE) as well as key socio-economic data and a list of financing resources. (More information available at: www.mena100.org)

5. Morocco joined the OECD Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises and officially became the new Chair of the MENA-OECD Initiative

On the occasion of the Ministerial Conference, Morocco joined the 30 OECD member countries and 11 non-member countries in signing the OECD Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises. It is the second Arab country after Egypt to have adhered to the Declaration. The Declaration expresses a policy commitment by governments to support an open environment for international investors and encourage responsible investment by multinational companies as a means to promote prosperity and growth. Demonstrating regional leadership, the Kingdom of Morocco took over as Chair of the MENA-OECD Initiative and thus becomes the third Chair of the Initiative, after Jordan (2004-2006) and Egypt (2006-2009). On behalf of the new Chair, Moroccan Economy Minister H.E. Nizar Baraka announced a comprehensive work programme for the MENA-OECD Initiative over the coming years.

6. Regional policy recommendations to enhance the investment climate were released

MENA countries participating in the Investment Programme presented reviews of progress made in national investment policy reform as measured against the first Ministerial event held in Jordan in 2006. Other regional publications released at the Ministerial Conference included:

- A regional publication on Corporate Governance of Banks, which provided timely targeted recommendations to policy makers, banking supervisors, banking associations and individual banks in the region;
- A regional MENA survey of Insolvency Systems presented by the Hawkamah Institute on Corporate Governance;
- A Moroccan Investment Survey and Executive Summary of the first phase of the Business Climate Development Strategy (BCDS) conducted with Morocco, which provided an in-depth assessment of the evolving business climate in the Kingdom. (The process of adherence of Morocco to the OECD Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises was supported by the above publications);
- A study on “Investment and Governance Reforms in Iraq” explores the central role of governance and investment policy reforms in the reconstruction of Iraq, analysing recent policies and reforms, and providing practical recommendations.

C. Governance Programme New Initiatives and Actions

1. The Progress Report on Public Governance Reform in the Middle East and North Africa was endorsed.

Ministers endorsed the Progress Report on Public Governance Reform in the Middle East and North Africa and welcomed its publication. This Report is the result of large process of consultation and data collection in 9 MENA countries. Key areas of public governance reform have been selected in order to identify success stories and reform achievements that can contribute to increase knowledge about the process of modernisation of public governance institutions. The report shows that the last decade has witnessed continuous policy action in MENA countries to improve and enhance good governance institutions. Governments have embarked in ambitious programmes of reform trying to answer critical policy issues and get the machinery of government ready for development and sustainable economic

growth. Participants acknowledged that this report is a key contribution to the process of regional policy dialogue and shows the impact of the Initiative in the process of reform. The Report will be followed by other analysis about the ongoing process of Governance reform in the MENA region.

2. The Regional Charter for Quality in Regulation was endorsed by the MENA-OECD Governance Programme

Participant ministers endorsed the Regional Charter for Quality in Regulation in order to strengthen co-operation in the field of regulatory management and ensure a high regulatory quality. The Charter will serve as an instrument to provide guidance for Arab countries in improving regulatory policy and integrate principles and good practices into policy agendas and therefore reinforce the Rule of Law and legal security for citizens and business in the region. This will also contribute to reinforce co-operation in the field of regulatory reform in the framework of the Working Group IV on Public Service Delivery, Public-Private Partnerships and Regulatory Reform of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme. Participants agreed on the importance of a sound regulatory framework to ensure competitiveness, well functioning markets and balanced economic growth. The implementation of the Charter will contribute to find common policy responses to the challenges posed by the current economic crisis.

3. Agreement to increasingly address the rule of law component of governance

Participating ministers agreed to increasingly address the rule of law component of governance. Effective governments ensuring compliance with sound regulatory frameworks are a precondition for economic growth for business and citizens. Institutional frameworks promoting quality in regulation can have a critical impact on building an enabling environment for the protection of human rights and a fair economy. Promoting the rule of law requires sound processes of law-making and institutional systems delivering justice and ensuring an equitable distribution of rights. Governance frameworks are therefore at the core of the rule of law. The MENA-OECD Governance Programme will enforce capacity building activities in the policy areas of e-justice, integrity and regulatory reform, (including consultation mechanisms, regulatory impact analysis, law-drafting capacities, administrative law and simplification). Activities will be designed and implemented within the policy framework of the existing Working Groups, the Regional Centre for Expertise on Regulatory Quality in Tunisia, and the Regional Charter for Quality in Regulation.

4. Launch of the Distance Learning for Innovative Public Sector Initiative

On the 23 November 2009, during the plenary session of the Ministerial Conference, Italy's Minister for Public Administration and Innovation, Mr. Renato Brunetta, announced the launch of an Initiative to promote innovation in the public sector in the MENA Region through distance learning methodologies (DL4iPS). The Italian Initiative was supported in the Final Declaration. The OECD was also asked to become a permanent member of the Steering Committee of the Initiative, which will be formalised in an ad hoc exchange of letters in January 2010.

5. Support of the Gender Focus Group and Approval of the Programme of Work to build capacities for successful gender policies

Ministers and heads of delegations expressed their support to the Gender Focus Group and approved the programme of work to build capacities for successful gender policies. This Programme of Work has been prepared on the basis of an online questionnaire, fact finding missions throughout 2009, and intense consultations at the first meeting of the Gender Focus Group in May 2009 and the Meeting on Addressing Gender in Public Management in October 2009. This programme will support the efforts of MENA governments to develop comprehensive gender policies and action programmes to reinforce the role of women in the economy and the society, including gender oriented budgeting, gender regulatory impact assessment, personnel policies in the public sector and data collection on gender issues. Participants agreed that better public policies can promote a more active role of women and by this means have an impact on social and economic development.

6. The Focus Group on Green Growth and Territorial development was set up

The Focus Group on Green Growth and Territorial Development will support strengthened governance institutions and increased regional policy dialogue and co-operation for the widespread adoption of ecologically compatible behaviour and for the effective and sustainable management of natural resources in order to have a positive impact on long term economic growth, social well-being and human health. In particular, the Focus Group will contribute to facilitating regional dialogue and the sharing of good practices on water governance, including reinforcement of capacities at the local level for an effective implementation of territorial development policies and green growth strategies. The Focus group builds upon the increasing policy consensus on the opportunity of combining economic recovery with economic greening in view of the development of green growth strategies at both global and national levels.

7. The reinforcement of the Good Governance for Development support to the implementation of the Palestinian National Plan was approved

The Palestinian National Authority has been a key player in the implementation of the MENA OECD Governance Programme, where Palestinian high officials have been particularly active in its multiple networks of policy-makers. The Palestinian National Authority is currently implementing the Palestinian National Plan (PNP) targeting the improvement of the institutional capabilities of the Palestinian administration and setting a clear priority in implementing public governance reforms. Thanks to a specific contribution of the Government of Norway, the MENA-OECD governance programme will contribute to reinforce the capacities of the PNA, to ensure the Rule of Law, and the viability of the Palestinian administration by further integrating the Palestinian authorities in the process of regional dialogue and providing capacity building and policy advice in key areas of governance reform at national level.

8. The implementation of a Peer Review on Electronic Government in Egypt was announced

On 22 November 2009, Egypt's Deputy Minister of State for Administrative Development, His Excellency Dr. Ashraf Hassan Abdelwahab, Italy's Minister for Public Administration Reform and Innovation, Mr. Renato Brunetta, and Mr. Rolf Alter, OECD Director of Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate, announced the first E-Government Review of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme. The review will be financed by Italy, through its debt swap agreement with Egypt, and will start in early 2010. The review was welcomed in the Final Declaration. Participants underlined the importance of this Initiative to the process of regional policy dialogue.

D. High level of visibility generated for the MENA region as an attractive investment destination

The two days of events in Marrakech brought together over 700 participants from government, business, and civil society. High-level participants included HRH Prince Philippe of Belgium, Moroccan Prime Minister H.E. Mr. Abbas El Fassi, Egyptian Investment Minister H.E. Dr. Mahmoud Mohieldin, and US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues H.E. Melanne Verveer, and Ministers and Ambassadors from MENA and OECD countries. Both the MENA and OECD media covered the events extensively, generating around 50 related press articles and interviews (available at: http://www.oecd.org/document/51/0,3343,en_34645207_34645466_43182899_1_1_1_1,00.html). The OECD's flagship media publication, the Observer, also produced a special issue on the Ministerial Conference, featuring a Ministerial panel and contributions on free economic zones, public governance reforms, investment, SME financing, transport, renewable energy, women entrepreneurship, and water, and included an editorial from the OECD Secretary General on why governance and investment matter for development.

II. DOCUMENTS

MARRAKECH MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON GOVERNANCE AND INVESTMENT

MENA-OECD MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ♦ 23 NOVEMBER 2009

Ministers and heads of delegations from 16 MENA and 22 OECD countries adopted the Marrakech Declaration on Investment and Governance on 23 November 2009 in Marrakech, Morocco at the MENA-OECD Ministerial Conference. The Declaration sets out the principles and objectives of the MENA-OECD Initiative, a joint project for policy dialogue and implementation. The Declaration underlines the critical roles of public governance and an attractive business climate for achieving higher levels of economic development and growth in the Arab region. Both OECD and MENA countries express through the Declaration their firm commitment to work together for further improvement of policies for the public sector, the business climate, and the judiciary. The ultimate goal of the MENA-OECD Initiative is to build stronger, fairer and cleaner economies responding to the needs and demands of the young and dynamic MENA societies and to emerging global public policy challenges.

Declaration Adopted in the context of the Ministerial Conference held in Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco, on 23 November 2009:

I. **WE**, governments of the Middle East and North African (MENA) and OECD member countries, including Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, United States, Djibouti, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Palestinian National Authority, Poland, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Yemen and the EU Commission participating in the MENA-OECD Ministerial Conference held in Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco, on 23 November 2009:

1. **RECOGNISING** that the global financial and economic crisis has demonstrated that multilaterally coordinated responses to episodes of global turmoil and common strategies are necessary to ensure economic recovery and long term sustainable growth;
2. **REAFFIRMING** our commitment to build a more inclusive global economy that takes into consideration the variety of national conditions and levels of development, and that integrates these different factors into the global decision-making processes;
3. **RECOGNISING** that a clear political will and effective governments that ensure compliance with sound regulatory frameworks and high quality of public services are fundamental to economic recovery and long-term growth;
4. **RECOGNISING** the fundamental role of the private sector to achieve sustainable growth, employment, and generate a tax base that supports the financing of education, healthcare, infrastructure and broader poverty reduction objectives as laid out in the Millennium Development Goals;
5. **AFFIRMING** the importance of close coordination with other international initiatives supporting private and public sector development, governance and investment climate improvements in MENA countries;
6. **UNDERLINING** that the MENA-OECD Initiative is a multilateral partnership which has demonstrated its effectiveness in supporting national reforms through regional policy dialogue and the formulation of action-oriented policy recommendations; acknowledging that the resource contribution by countries made the implementation of the Initiative possible;
7. **NOTING** that MENA countries have achieved progress in attracting local, regional and foreign investment and foster regional integration and competitiveness, despite the impact of the global crisis; and the process of readjustment and modernisation of public governance institutions has been reinforced;
8. **LOOKING** forward continuing the activities of the MENA-OECD Initiative for the next years on the basis of past experiences and orientations identified in this Declaration.

II. DECLARE

1. Our intention to pursue the process of investment and governance policy dialogue between MENA and OECD economies, aiming to achieve higher levels of economic development in the Arab region and the OECD area based on sustainable economic growth;
2. Our firm engagement to work towards improving policies in the areas of governance, including the public sector and the judiciary, and business climate in order to build more robust economies that respond to the needs and demands of the young and dynamic MENA societies.

III. In view of the above we commit to pursue the MENA-OECD Initiative in the MENA region, guided by the following policy considerations; **we**:

1. **REAFFIRM** our strong commitment to private sector development to generate employment and raise living standards based on a **stronger, cleaner and fairer growth**;
2. **EMPHASISE** the importance of the **rule of law**, including the protection of private property and contract enforcement through effective and unbiased access to justice, as well as through an independent, unbiased, competent and effective prosecution service and judiciary, including civil, administrative and commercial courts;
3. **REITERATE** the need to foster **free trade and investment flows**, which are crucial to innovation, infrastructure development and employment generation;
4. **EMPHASISE** the importance of **fostering integrity and transparency** in the public sector to better serve citizens and businesses, by defining a level playing field and fostering trust in government; this is a common challenge for which multilateral action and peer advice are necessary tools;
5. **ENCOURAGE enhanced transparency** in government procedures, laws and regulations as decisive for a vibrant business environment and re-confirm our commitment to fight corruption in all its forms;
6. **REAFFIRM** our commitment to involve **citizens and civil society** in policy-making and to use consultation mechanisms prior to decision-making as an effective means to ensure better public services and successful policy implementation; note in this context the importance of independent business associations;
7. **UNDERLINE** the importance of policy action to increase the contribution of **women** to economic development and to help them benefit from the outcomes of economic growth;
8. **EMPHASISE** the need to promote preservation and sustainable management of natural resources as a basis for **green sustainable growth** that will further support job creation and better public services;
9. **NOTE** the need to develop **human capital**, in all areas of economic and social activities;

10. **EMPHASISE** the importance of **strong corporate governance frameworks** and **responsible business conduct** to avoid future crises; strive to implement the highest international standards of corporate governance in particular in banking and financial sectors as well as in public and private enterprises; reaffirm our attachment to internationally-acknowledged principles of corporate social responsibility;
11. **UNDERLINE** the importance of an efficient, **fair and transparent tax system** as a sustainable source of public revenues; ensure that the tax system is encouraging to SME creation, growth and tax compliance; respect international standards on tax transparency and exchange of information for tax purposes;
12. **PROMOTE** greater **access to finance** particularly of micro, small and medium enterprises by increasing transparency of information; ensuring an appropriate legislative framework for secured transactions and collateral; diversifying the sources of finance, i.e., strengthening the banking sector and supporting continuous and sustainable development of stock and bond markets, to finance the growth of innovative entrepreneurs, including women entrepreneurs.

IV. MENA and OECD countries express their gratitude to the Arab Republic of Egypt for its successful chairmanship of the Initiative, and welcome the handover of this chairmanship to the Kingdom of Morocco; they invite the Steering Groups to elaborate future work based on the analysis of past achievements, the strategic orientations of this Declaration and the Annex “Overview of the MENA-OECD Initiative”, calling on donors and contributors for continuing financial support, and agreeing on the following:

Orientations for the implementation of the MENA-OECD Initiative

A. Governance Programme

In view of the above and recalling the Dead Sea Declaration **WE resolve** to:

1. **MANDATE** the Programme to pursue and expand its activities in support of **Public Governance Reform**, including:
 - The use of the **Joint Learning Studies** mechanisms as an effective tool for policy reform through peer advice;
 - The reinforcement of the **regional centers** of training and expertise as a mechanism to promote capacity building and regional integration;
 - The use of **policy dialogue** as a mechanism for regional collaboration and support to national reforms;
 - The use of e-learning tools and programmes;
 - The coordination with **specialised regional networks**, including but not limited to the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET).

2. **ENDORSE** the *Regional Charter for Quality in Regulation* in view of contributing to an enabling regulatory environment promoting sustainable economic growth in MENA Countries. Ministers look forward to joint activities to support implementation and a future report on achievements in this domain;
3. **MANDATE** the Programme to further promote the use of **electronic government** solutions and reforms as an effective tool for transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, and transformation of public sectors and their service provisions in the interest of both citizens and businesses;
4. **MANDATE** the Programme to implement the strategy for women's involvement in public governance drafted by the **Gender Focus Group** and invite this group to pursue its activities;
5. **MANDATE** the Programme to explore to set up a new Focus Group on Public Governance for Green Sustainable Growth and Regional Development;
6. **WELCOME** the publication of the **Progress Report on Public Governance Reform in Arab Countries** and invite the Initiative's Working Groups and the OECD Secretariat to pursue their continuous action in data collection and assessment;
7. **WELCOME** the reinforcement of the Good Governance for Development support to the implementation of the **Palestinian National Plan**;
8. **WELCOME** and support the Italian proposal to improve the dissemination of best methodologies, knowledge and practices on **public sector innovation**, through an international initiative aimed at delivering high quality **e-learning activities** to build regional and local capacities.
9. **WELCOME** the implementation of a **Peer Review on Electronic Government in Egypt**, with the support of the Italian Government.
10. **UNDERLINE** that citizen participation and inclusion of civil society organisations constitute a strategic option to overcoming public governance challenges.

B. Investment Programme

In view of the above and recalling the Declarations issued during the last Ministerial meetings in Jordan (2006) and Egypt (2007), **WE**:

1. **MANDATE** the Programme to continue work in the existing regional process, including the **Working Groups and Task Forces** set up by the Programme and their agreed deliverables;
2. **MANDATE** the Programme to conduct **Regional Peer Learning** exercises using the Business Climate Development Strategy assessment frameworks;
3. **REINFORCE** the need to use the **Regional Centers** of the Investment Programme for awareness raising and training as a mechanism to promote capacity building;
4. **EXPLORE** areas of cooperation and mutual reinforcement with the **Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network** (ACINET) with a view to contributing to a stronger, cleaner and fairer investment environment;

5. **MANDATE** the Programme to implement the work programme of the newly launched **MENA-OECD Business Council**;
6. **MANDATE** the Programme to pursue the **BCDS assessments** with a number of additional countries and to promote further MENA countries' adherence to the Declaration on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises;
7. **SUPPORT** actions to be conducted by the **Women's Business Network** launched in 2007;
8. **MANDATE** the Programme to explore setting up a new **Working Group on Competitiveness**;
9. **SUPPORT** the proposed actions to be conducted by the **Responsible Business Conduct Forum** and work on fostering integrity in the conduct of business;
10. **MANDATE** the Programme to pursue analysis of ways to **Strengthen Regional Investment Frameworks** including screening the effectiveness of regional investment protection instruments with a view to promoting intra-regional investment flows;
11. **MANDATE** the Programme to explore possible concerted regional actions towards promotion of **green growth**;
12. **MANDATE** the Programme to support the development of **micro, small and medium enterprises** and their access to financial markets, by leveraging existing initiatives of participating countries and making use of all existing financing options, including Islamic finance.

Annex to the 2009 Declaration of the MENA-OECD Ministerial

Overview of the MENA-OECD Initiative

1. Since its launch in 2005, the MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development (“the Initiative”) has been helping MENA countries to improve investment and governance. Ownership and oversight are shared with the countries of the region through Steering Groups jointly chaired by an OECD and a MENA country and Working Groups responsible for the delivery of substantive work.
2. The MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development aims at improving public governance and investment with a view to promoting economic development, job creation and human and social development. The Initiative supports ongoing reform processes in the region, creates regional networks for policy dialogue, enhances capacity for policy implementation and monitors progress. The Initiative is designed to help create the conditions for sustained economic growth and investment in the region, improve employment, create opportunities for private initiative, promote efficient, transparent and accountable public sectors and foster regional co-operation.
3. The main objectives are:
 - Deepening regional policy dialogue and capacity building;
 - Fostering peer-advice and partnership for reform at the national level;
 - Monitoring and measuring progress;
 - Developing partnerships with regional institutions and international organisations.
4. Non-prescriptive peer reviews are built into the Initiative’s tools such as the Joint Learning Study and the Business Climate Development Strategy (BCDS). In both cases, the strong participation of MENA countries in producing the results are a powerful mechanism to encourage follow up action on reform. In addition, the Joint Learning Studies promote South-South co-operation by systematically including peers from other countries of the region. Both the Joint Learning Studies and BCDS can contribute to the programmes of work of development agencies and financial multilateral institutions, as they provide for a set of policy recommendations that are based on a process of consultation and dialogue.
5. The Initiative has currently set up 14 regional networks, including:
 - Two Steering Groups;
 - Eight Expert Working Groups;
 - A Task Force on Corporate Governance of Banks; MENA-OECD Enterprise Financing Network; the Responsible Business Conduct Forum; the Women’s Business Network and the Gender Focus Group.
6. The networks of the Initiative are composed of policy-makers from the region and OECD member government representatives. In addition, the private sector is involved in all meetings of the Investment Pillar and civil society attends meetings of the Governance Pillar. In many cases there has been a longstanding country representation at all meetings of the Initiative. In some cases,

representation has changed due to rotation in ministries of MENA partners or competence reallocations.

7. The MENA-OECD Initiative has contributed to the establishment of the Arab Anti-Corruption & Integrity Network (ACINET), which will help Arab countries, in conjunction with the MENA-OECD Initiative, to engage in policy dialogue, capacity development, and knowledge networking on matters of transparency, accountability, integrity and the implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption, the OECD Convention on Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions, and other applicable international and regional instruments;

8. All MENA countries engaged in the Initiative have nominated, by Ministerial appointment, a special representative of their countries in the Steering Groups. In addition, many participating countries have nominated a country team comprised of officials of relevant Ministries/agencies. These National Co-ordination Committees ensure inter-ministerial coordination on the national level and promote a whole-of-government approach.

9. The MENA-OECD Initiative *generates impact* through a comprehensive approach that involves regional dialogue, peer review, definition of reform priorities and assistance in implementation:

- Regional networking, policy dialogue and capacity building
 - Identification of national and regional priorities;
 - Organisation of regional capacity-building activities to promote policy dialogue and knowledge sharing;
 - Creation of regional networks and training centers.
- Peer support for national reforms
 - Elaboration and implementation of national action plans with time-bound targets;
 - Elaboration of joint learning studies and business climate strategies to assess policies and provide advice for successful reforms.
- National analysis and implementation support
 - Stocktaking of the state of governance and investment policy in MENA countries;
 - Collection of comparative data to benchmark reform progress;
 - Targeted capacity-development interventions.

10. Ministers and high-level government officials have attended Ministerial meetings of the Initiative and adopted declarations on how to improve investment and governance policies in the region. For instance, the last Ministerial meeting of the Initiative hosted by the Egyptian Prime Minister in November 2007 in Cairo, Egypt, produced Ministerial Declarations and Conclusions on regional priority issues in the areas of investment and governance. MENA countries have also taken on important institutional responsibilities by chairing Working Groups and the Steering Groups of the Initiative at the level of minister, state-secretary or director. Minister level Chairs of the Initiative have also addressed meetings of the Council and the ERC.

11. The performance of the Initiative is assessed on two dimensions: the evaluation and benchmarking of the Initiative's progress and the progress achieved on reform in MENA countries.

12. A "Results Oriented Logical Framework" has been developed and is used for assessing the progress made by the Initiative's Working Group meetings. This tool has been refined to differentiate among outcomes, outputs, impact, risks, reach, partners and alternative strategies. Feedback by partner countries is being sought on a systematic basis.

13. The country-focused BCDS and the Joint Learning Studies underscore the Initiative's stronger focus on the evaluation of national reform progress. For example, the BCDS currently being conducted in two countries is evaluating progress in policy reforms and providing recommendations on how to move forward. Similarly, Joint Learning Studies in a number of countries have provided insight on progress made in the area of public governance reform.

14. Co-operation takes place with a number of partner organisations. The BCDS exercise is conducted in partnership with the World Bank and in the case of Egypt co-financed by the EU Commission. The EU Commission also financed a regional assessment under the MEDA European Enterprise Charter. The Initiative concluded a Memorandum of Understanding with UNIDO at the last Ministerial meeting for work on MENA projects. The Islamic Development Bank is co-sponsoring a business promotion related activity of the Initiative conducted out of the Bahrain MENA Investment Centre. IFC's PEP MENA programme, the World Bank, the EU Commission, the MEPI Commercial Law Initiative, UNDP POGAR and EIB have been members of the Steering Groups of the Initiative. UNDP country offices have also been involved in different activities related to governance and UNDP is a key partner in the Iraq project. UNDP POGAR has a strategic relationship with the Initiative in the implementation of the Good Governance for Development in Arab Countries Initiative that focuses on the judiciary component of the Initiative. The Initiative is currently considering ways of partnering with the newly created Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

15. The MENA Initiative is fully funded by voluntary contributions. Financial and institutional support of OECD member countries through voluntary contributions and co-chairmanship is fully integrated in the programme cycle (planning and assessment). The Results Oriented Logical Framework and the Strategic Environmental Assessment have been developed on this basis.

16. The Initiative has initiated and supported a number of Regional Centres in the MENA region. These Centres on Public Governance, Investment and Corporate Governance act as a regional hub for workshops, training events and conferences supporting the Initiative, but also other regional projects conducted by partner organisations:

- MENA Investment Centre, Manama, Bahrain;
- Tax and Financial Management Training Centre, Cairo, Egypt;
- Centre for Public Policy Evaluation, Rabat, Morocco;
- Centre for Competitiveness, Tunis, Tunisia;
- Centre for Expertise on Regulatory Quality in Tunis, Tunisia;
- Hawkamah, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

REGIONAL CHARTER FOR REGULATORY QUALITY

Preamble

To improve national economies and to strengthen the role of government in guiding economic and social development, we have drafted this charter on law drafting and regulatory quality.

We will draw on the 1995 OECD Recommendation on Improving the Quality of Government Regulation and the 2005 OECD Guiding Principles for Regulatory Quality and Performance when improving procedures to draft laws and regulations that are adapted to our institutions, cultures and potential for development.

Regulatory policy: a broad programme with a whole-of-government perspective

We recognize that regulatory reform should be supported at the highest political level, to promote consideration of regulatory policy, tools and institutions as a whole, and to communicate strategies and benefits to the public. We will strengthen co-ordination mechanisms inside the administration to foster coherence across policy objectives and to clarify responsibilities and roles.

We recognize that good regulation should (i) serve clearly identified policy goals, and be effective in achieving those goals; (ii) have a sound legal and empirical basis; (iii) produce benefits that justify costs, considering the distribution of effects across society, and taking economic, environmental and social effects into account; (iv) minimise costs and market distortions; (v) promote innovation through market incentives and goal-based approaches; (vi) be clear, simple and practical for users; (vii) be consistent with other regulations and policies; and (viii) be compatible as far as possible with competition, trade and investment-facilitating principles at domestic and international levels.

Building institutional frameworks for regulatory reform

We will develop and publicize an explicit policy for regulatory policy based on sound principles of good governance which can be the responsibility of an oversight unit to monitor, so that problems and gaps can be identified, the benefits of regulation measured, and progress reported on a consistent and regular yearly basis to the government and to the public.

We will establish institutional arrangements for regulatory quality that are accountable and transparent, including measures that promote integrity. Regulatory institutions should ensure that the public interest is respected.

Use of regulatory tools to increase transparency in the process

We affirm the importance of administrative procedures for consideration of new regulations and laws, which must be clearly stated. These procedures should promote transparency, administrative certainty and due process. Consultation should be broadly based and balanced amongst different interest groups, and consultation processes themselves must be transparent and responsive. Law-

drafting procedures should be managed efficiently, to reduce delays that create uncertainty and confusion, as when implementation decrees are needed to make laws effective.

Sustaining the path of regulatory reform

In pursuit of these goals, we will develop specific action plans: (i) staff units adequately to carry out assessments of regulations against the principles of good regulation and assure compliance with quality standards, and to consider alternatives to regulation where appropriate and possible, (ii) assess and improve rule-making procedures to carry out a review of both the legal basis and the economic impacts of existing or new legislation; (iii) update existing regulations, and review regulations where change will yield the highest and most visible benefits; (iv) develop electronically accessible Websites to make rulemaking information accessible to the public, to receive public comment on regulatory matters, to make all laws available to the public, (v) assure clear and plain-language drafting, including in translations, and (vi) reduce administrative burdens and licensing and permit requirements, with particular attention whenever new regulations and laws are drafted, and measure administrative costs for citizens and business.

We recognize that regulatory reform calls for a dynamic approach, sustained over time. Capacity has to be developed in stages, incrementally. We commit to participate in regional networks and centres dedicated to administrative simplification, regulatory quality and policy, and public service delivery. We will report on progress made through annual reports or other forms as appropriate.

Annex

The steps undertaken by OECD and MENA countries, in a framework of regional co-operation, are to be welcomed, as with all regional initiatives for regulatory reform. To overcome the difficulties of implementation related to the diversity and specific nature of juridical systems, linguistic diversity, and juridical methods and institutional frameworks, the charter, training and drafting guides must take these into account as part of a regional, coherent and progressive process.

JOINT BUSINESS STATEMENT

PRESENTED AT THE 2009 MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF THE MENA-OECD INITIATIVE

Preamble

On the occasion of the 2009 Ministerial Conference of the MENA-OECD Initiative, this statement is presented to Ministers by the MENA-OECD business community, comprising the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD (BIAC), the Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc (CGEM), and other business associations, chambers of commerce, and representatives of private companies active in the MENA region.

The MENA-OECD business community commends MENA and OECD governments on the progress made in investment policy reforms, which led to rising inflows of foreign direct investment, steady GDP growth, and job creation over the last decade.

However, this positive trend has been negatively impacted by the current global economic crisis. Many MENA and OECD countries are facing challenges due to changing economic environments, and some countries have adopted protectionist measures that reduce freedom of investment and the movement of capital and goods. Such measures amplify the negative effects of the crisis by increasing the unpredictability and uncertainty for business and discouraging foreign investment. For the common interest of MENA and OECD economies, such protectionist measures must be avoided. Opening up to trade and investment is essential for ensuring an enabling environment for sustainable economic growth.

To counter the negative effects of the economic crisis, and to achieve longer term objectives, such as economic diversification, job creation and greater female participation in the labour market, business and governments from OECD and MENA countries must work closely together. Effective, early and regular consultations between governments and their representative national business organisations bring greater legitimacy and credibility in policy reforms.

Recommended Actions

The business community recommends governments to take the following actions for economic recovery and sustainable economic growth:

- **REFRAIN** from raising new barriers to trade and investment, and hence improve the business environment by ensuring greater openness, transparency, non-discrimination, accountability and predictability of all policies and legislations, thus helping to reduce the risk perception of the region. Any government restrictions to foreign investment should reflect these points and should be based only on narrowly defined national security criteria;

- **FOSTER** intra-regional economic and trade integration between the MENA countries in order to maximise their economic potential, focusing on reducing tariffs and developing policies for export promotion;
- **IMPROVE** access to finance, particularly for small- and medium-sized enterprises, and to plan exit strategies, in consultation with the business community;
- **ENSURE** that the regulatory framework is stable, predictable, non-discriminatory, and transparent, and that procedures for obtaining licences and authorisations are timely and effective;
- **PURSUE** region-wide efforts for commercial law reform with the support of all relevant partners;
- **RECOGNISE** the importance of enhancing the competitiveness and adaptability of the labour market through labour policies to improve entry and re-entry into the labour market for men and women, thus reducing unemployment. Improving healthcare and education and training services, as well as facilitating the movement of labour and the granting of business visas for MENA entrepreneurs, will also be key in this endeavour;
- **PROVIDE** incentives for women to join the labour force, promote women entrepreneurship and remove gender-related obstacles, and facilitate women's access to management and technical training and access to finance;
- **TAKE** greater political initiative in diversifying national economies, which for the time being are in many cases overly-dependent on a very limited set of economic sectors;
- **PROMOTE** green growth, considering the 2009 OECD Declaration on Green Growth;
- **ENCOURAGE** the use of public-private partnerships as a mechanism for raising much-needed investment in long-term projects, such as for infrastructure, as well as for trust building between governments and the private sector;
- **FAVOUR** private investment in state-of-the-art infrastructures for citizens (such as telecommunications, electricity, water), even in the most rural areas, and to provide incentives where private investments are not sustainable, thus helping to jumpstart the economy by reducing barriers to entry for small and medium-sized businesses, improving productivity, and reducing industry costs;
- **WORK** together with business to promote corporate governance and fight against corruption;
- **DEVELOP**, where needed, an attractive tax system that is fair and transparent;
- **PLACE** greater emphasis on fostering innovation and intellectual property rights protection in the region;
- **ENCOURAGE** widespread use of the OECD Business Climate Development Strategy (BCDS) in the MENA region, as an effective tool for measuring and benchmarking business climate reforms.

Business Commitment

The MENA-OECD business community is committed to:

- **SUPPORTING** governments' efforts to improve the business environment in the region for sustainable economic recovery from the current economic crisis;
- **PROMOTING** responsible business conduct and corporate governance initiatives by sharing best practices and creating sectoral common approaches;
- **ENGAGING** more closely with educational institutions to ensure a strengthening of skills in the region, particularly for youths and for women, and better matching of those skills to both short-term and longer-term labour market needs;
- **ENGAGING** in and promoting efficient and effective public-private partnerships for development;
- **SUPPORTING** and encouraging the exchange of technology and expertise between OECD countries and the MENA region to foster increased innovation, with due protection of intellectual property rights;

Business thanks the Ministers from MENA countries and the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting the Ministerial conference. We hope that this conference, which takes place in the context of the most profound economic crisis in recent history, will enable governments, business, and other stakeholders to effectively foster sustainable economic recovery in the MENA region.

Marrakech, Morocco, 22 November 2009

FOSTERING WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE MENA REGION

◆ ACTION PLAN ◆

Preamble

WE, participants in the Marrakech Women Business Leaders Summit held on 22 November 2009, endorse this Action Plan as a framework for developing effective means for women's economic empowerment and for mainstreaming gender in business reforms:

- **BUILDING** on the Declaration on Fostering Women's Entrepreneurship in the MENA Region, adopted by governments on the occasion of the 2007 MENA-OECD Investment Programme Ministerial Meeting in Cairo;
- **RECALLING** that the key objective of the MENA-OECD Investment Programme is to mobilise investment as a driving force for sustainable economic growth and employment in the region, and that support of business climate reforms is instrumental to accomplishing this objective;
- **ACKNOWLEDGING** that the private sector is a key driver for job creation and sustainable economic growth in the region;
- **ACKNOWLEDGING** that in both MENA and OECD countries achievements in educational equality represent a remarkable opportunity for inclusive growth and private sector development, which requires translating these achievements into the labour market;
- **CONVINCED** that the MENA region can tap into the great potential of an increasingly well-educated youth and female population, who can contribute to economic diversification towards sectors that are internationally competitive, knowledge-driven and labour-intensive, leading to rapid growth and rising standards of living;
- **SHARING THE VIEW** that co-operation and action-oriented knowledge sharing, both among countries participating in the MENA-OECD investment Programme and with other regional and international gender-related initiatives, can strengthen women's involvement in the economy and strengthen women's economic empowerment;
- **RECOGNISING** the large body of valuable work conducted by governments and international organisations operating in the region including the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the United Nations, as well as a broad series of national, regional and international business associations, in particular women's business associations;
- **RECOGNISING** that social, cultural and legal aspects of society need to be addressed to ensure women's empowerment. More particularly, implicit or explicit legal or cultural prohibitions that inhibit women's ability to work should be analysed, their consequences on the economy fully described and recommendations made.

- **STRESSING** the importance of leveraging the collective knowledge and experience of existing long-standing initiatives, and of sharing their established regional and international good practices;
- **WELCOMING** the pledge of representatives of business and civil society to promote women's empowerment in business and to support governments of the region in their efforts to foster women's entrepreneurship employment;
- **WELCOMING** the pledge by donor countries and international organisations based within and outside the region to support the countries of the region in their efforts to foster women's entrepreneurship through technical co-operation programmes.
- **APPROVING** this Action Plan as a framework for the development of effective mechanisms to support women's economic empowerment and to anchor gender-related issues within business climate reforms.

ACTIONS

In order to meet the above objectives, participants encourage governments in the MENA region to take concrete policy actions to promote women's entrepreneurship and employment and invite the MENA-OECD Investment Programme to continue including gender issues in relation to private sector development as a core activity of its programme.

Action 1: Encourage women's entrepreneurship and employment by creating a business enabling environment

The Stocktaking Report on Progress in Implementation of the 2007 Declaration on Fostering Women's Entrepreneurship in the MENA Region shows an improvement in training for women and a corresponding increase in women's entrepreneurship and employment. It provides an overview of actions by governments and other stakeholders in the MENA region to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment. It also outlines a series of existing barriers and obstacles. In particular it brings to light that:

1. Overall levels of women's entrepreneurship are amongst the lowest in the world although more women have received training.
2. Statistics on the number of women entrepreneurs and women's economic participation are often unavailable or incomplete.
3. Women's entrepreneurship and economic participation are relatively limited due to gender-specific barriers to business creation and development, including cultural norms, civil law, or barriers in the business environment.
4. The global economic crisis has created a cluster of new challenges for women's entrepreneurship that are also common in other regions. Falling demand for exports, slowing capital flows and sluggish growth create new risks for women that may threaten past achievements and impede progress in promoting gender equality.

Exchanges amongst representatives of governments, corporations, business associations, non-government organisations and international organisations in line with the Stocktaking Report shall:

- Recognise the positive role women play in economic growth;
- Identify all key barriers to levelling the business playing field for women;

- Formulate recommendations to governments and other stakeholders such as employers and business organisations in the MENA region on measures to reduce these barriers and help adopt policy responses and solutions that encourage women's employment and business development, who are drivers of innovation, job creation, and economic growth;
- Collect good practices materials on how to foster women's entrepreneurship and enhance women's involvement in the economy.

Subsequent to the completion of the Stocktaking Report, and in view of further facilitating women's entrepreneurship and employment, the MENA-OECD Investment Programme will support and encourage other studies on gender-related issues that bring to light problems encountered by women in doing business in the MENA region, provide suggestions on how these problems could be overcome and the specific contributions that women can make to the single economies of the region, leveraging OECD's expertise and existing work (such as Wikigender).

Action 2: Facilitate business registration and growth through enhanced access to finance, in particular for women-owned businesses

Barriers and costs for opening and closing firms in the MENA region, including access to financing for business creation and development, create difficulties for all businesses. However, as identified in the Stocktaking Report on Progress in Implementation of the 2007 *Declaration on Fostering Women's Entrepreneurship in the MENA Region*, difficulties are particularly acute for women-owned businesses. Legal, social and cultural norms associate higher risks with investment in women-owned companies. Biased low confidence in women's abilities to create or manage a business successfully and repay a loan makes women's access to finance difficult. It is also reported that loans for women are subject to increased collateral and their costs are substantially higher than those for men. The MENA-OECD Investment Programme shall conduct a comparative study of legal, institutional and cultural provisions regulating access to finance for businesses in the MENA region, with a particular emphasis on gender-based obstacles. This study will help identify:

1. *De jure* and *de facto* practices applicable to access to credit in the MENA countries;
2. Cultural codes associated with obtaining credit or business development measures;
3. Status of ownership rights and collateral requirements, including land tenure;
4. Good practices materials on reducing barriers and costs related to business loans and grants, including via government-supported programmes.

Representatives of governments, corporations, business associations, non-government organisations and international organisations shall promote gender responsiveness by:

- Identifying key barriers regarding access to finance in the MENA region and bringing to light particular gender-based differential treatments;
- Providing country examples of how to overcome barriers;
- Formulating recommendations to governments on legal and institutional business climate measures that reduce barriers to opening and closing businesses and growing SMEs by facilitating access to finance ;
- Formulating recommendations to the financial sector to better contribute to the development of private businesses, including women-owned and –managed businesses, through objective consideration of qualifications and business strategies.

Action 3: Improve economic policy through better gender-disaggregated statistics and indicators

Economic data, in particular gender-disaggregated data, is relatively limited in the MENA region. Lack of harmonised data makes it difficult to effect comparisons across the region.

This represents an important obstacle, as government strategies and policies for fostering women's entrepreneurship and employment require a solid understanding of the state of women's effective and potential participation in the economies of the MENA region.

To assist MENA governments in building more comprehensive data systems and supporting the development of adequate business climate reforms, the MENA-OECD Investment Programme shall:

1. Take stock of existing gender-disaggregated statistics in the MENA region. This will involve data on self-owned entrepreneurs, economic participants (including business managers); participation in the public versus the private sector; participation in specific sectors of the economy; contribution to the economy in terms of employment, productivity, wealth and openness to new technologies and innovations.
2. Ascertain which further gender-disaggregated statistics are required to determine adequate policy responses to enhance women's participation in the economy.

Analysis of available and required data to support the dialogue on policy reform and growth assessments shall be followed by:

- Diagnosing necessary measures governments should take to gather gender-disaggregated statistics and indicators on meaningful gender-related data.
- Training of government representatives to develop their statistical apparatus to produce internationally-comparable data.
- Supporting governments in the MENA region in collecting, publishing and monitoring gender-disaggregated data on women's participation in the economy.

Action 4: Facilitate participation in the MENA-OECD Women's Business Network and ensure increased contacts between business networks

Local, regional, and global women's associations have grown over the last decade. Moreover, the women's business associations have been instrumental in identifying regional obstacles to women's entrepreneurship and employment and have been able to provide valuable support to women-owned businesses. All these associations also have helped draw government and international attention to women's rights and their contributions to economic development.

To further participatory dialogue aimed at stimulating policy change and consolidating the knowledge base – while avoiding duplications of local, national or regional efforts – the MENA-OECD Investment Programme shall:

1. Identify and list relevant MENA women's governmental bodies, business associations, NGOs, and other organisations working on women's economic empowerment.
2. Invite representatives of organisations to join the MENA-OECD Women's Business Network to enhance partnerships and encourage information sharing on respective activities and lessons learned. Streamlining the various efforts and avoiding duplication will make the various undertakings more effective.
3. Set up an internet platform through which participants in the MENA-OECD Women's Business Network can regularly exchange information and identify the key issues for discussion regarding fostering women's entrepreneurship.

4. Establish an electronic library where all research regarding women's economic empowerment in the MENA region and in OECD countries can be referenced.
5. Create a corporate ambassador's programme to foster women's economic role through mentoring programmes between OECD countries and the MENA region.
6. Provide support and advise on training programmes designed to facilitate women's involvement in the economy.

Implementation

Implementation of the pillars of action calls for the participation of many stakeholders. Governments of the MENA region will designate government representatives with sufficient authority as well as adequate staff support and resources to engage and fulfil the policy objectives of the action plan. Partners in the Action Plan, in particular MENA governments, will take measures to promote and publicise the Action Plan. While governments from the region have primary responsibility for addressing gender-related obstacles to women's empowerment in the economy, the international community as well as the business sector and civil society have a key role to play in supporting a country's reform efforts.

Progress will come from the efforts of participating governments supported by the business sector and civil society to identify concrete policy measures to level the playing field for women. Concrete efforts and achievements will build on local ownership and partnerships with stakeholders from within and outside the region. Consultative and collaborative efforts will mobilise local, regional and international initiatives involved in gender-related business climate reforms.

The MENA-OECD Women's Business Network will provide the institutional framework for exchanging information and ensure co-ordination within the activity and with other initiatives. The MENA-OECD Women's Business Network will occasionally meet with the MENA-OECD Working Group 2 on SME Policy, Entrepreneurship and Human Capital Development (WG2) and report progress achieved under the different pillars of activities. Based thereon, WG2 will inform to the Steering Group of the MENA-OECD Investment Programme. Specifically, the MENA-OECD Women's Business Network will:

- Convene regular meetings to engage in discussions, with a view to identifying best practices and solutions to reduce obstacles to women's entrepreneurship and enhance women's empowerment in the economy.
- Facilitate and help establish regular contacts and exchanges with the OECD as well as MENA business associations.
- Evaluate, assess and monitor the impact of the Action Plan as well as assess progress on women's economic empowerment in the region.

Findings and conclusions by the MENA-OECD Women's Business Network will also feed discussions of the MENA-OECD Business Council. The latter can provide input and recommendations on concrete private sector actions to further policy reforms which bear a gender impact.



Responsible Business Conduct Forum
An Initiative of the MENA-OECD Investment Programme

DECLARATION ON PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS CONDUCT IN THE MENA REGION

Presented on the occasion of the Ministerial Meeting of the MENA-OECD Initiative for Governance and Investment for Development on 23 November 2009, Marrakech, Morocco

Participants in the MENA Responsible Business Conduct Forum

RECALL:

The launch of the MENA Responsible Business Conduct Forum in October 2008 by the MENA-OECD Investment Programme in co-operation with other international and non-government organisations in response to the 2007 MENA-OECD Ministerial Declaration which, *inter alia*, “called for a regional dialogue on responsible business conduct, under the auspices of the MENA-OECD Investment Programme”.

The regional Forum’s objective to promote responsible business practices in the MENA region to maximise the contributions of investments to sustainable economic and social development.

RECOGNISE that:

- Governments which establish an environment allowing investors to act responsibly are more likely to attract sustainable investments;
- Investors who conduct their business in a responsible way are more likely to be successful and more likely to contribute to delivering sustainable benefits to the wider community;
- Civil society organisations have a key role to play through their contacts and knowledge of local communities, their understanding of business impacts on those communities, and their ability to mobilise efforts thanks to their expertise in specific areas;
- Constructive partnerships between governments, business and civil society help attract and maintain quality investments which also provide quality employment opportunities and better living standards for all.

EXPRESS:

Determination to continue to work together to:

- Promote individual and collective actions and partnerships to raise awareness and responsible business conduct;
- Provide a framework for sharing best practices and facilitating the availability and development of tools and guidelines, relevant to the MENA region;
- Assist and provide guidance to governments, businesses and civil society on how to measure the impact of policies aimed at supporting responsible business practices;
- Promote greater awareness of responsible business conduct among the media.

INVITE:

Governments of MENA countries to:

- Seek to provide an optimum policy and regulatory environment to support responsible business practices based on regular dialogue with business;
- Commit to promoting responsible business conduct and to supporting the goals of the Forum;
- Nominate a representative to participate in the Forum's activities;
- Help spread the benefits of this regional initiative by promoting collective action within their own countries.

OECD and member Governments as well as other international organisations to:

- Offer to the Forum the benefit of their own knowledge and experience in these areas so that this can be more widely shared in the MENA region.

Business representative organisations and national and multinational companies to:

- Commit to following responsible business conduct practices;
- Contribute their knowledge and experience to the work of the Forum to ensure that collective action fully addresses the needs of businesses seeking to ensure that their activities contribute to sustainable economic and social development in the region.

Civil society organisations to:

- Engage constructively in collective efforts to achieve the goals of the Forum;
- Contribute their knowledge and experience in support of more effective outcomes.

COMMIT the MENA Responsible Business Conduct Forum to give priority to the following activities in the course of 2010:

- Engage in multi-stakeholder discussions on experience with corporate strategies and practices for responsible business conduct, including corporate social responsibility, to promote and support action on the ground;
- Develop a platform for the identification and sharing of best practices, tools and guidelines that are relevant to the region; raise awareness and understanding of the issues among MENA governments to assist them in providing an optimum climate for responsible business, drawing on guidelines such as those produced by the OECD and the World Bank Institute;
- Elaborate indicators for measuring the effectiveness of responsible business conduct policies by participating governments;
- Promote collective action initiatives for higher transparency, accountability and for fighting corruption;
- Promote private sector efforts, in co-operation with governments and civil society, to meet the challenges in the field of climate change, water scarcity and land degradation, through environmentally-friendly technologies, sustainable energy consumption and responsible investment, drawing lessons from case study experience;
- Identify ways in which the Forum can add value to efforts already under way in the region to address the challenge of skills development, especially vocational training, entrepreneurship and practical skills for business.



www.oecd.org/mena/ministerial2009