

IN COLLABORATION WITH



“The Private Sector’s Role in the Fight Against Corruption: Challenges and Remedies for the Egyptian Business Community”

21 November 2011, Cairo, Egypt

Conclusions

The roundtable on “The Private Sector’s Role in the Fight Against Corruption” provided an opportunity for Egyptian business representatives to come together and engage in a frank and open exchange on the measures available to prevent and respond to corruption.

Participants discussed various international anti-corruption instruments regulating the business environment and their impact on measures and tools to improve integrity and transparency in business. They agreed that fighting corruption is increasingly important for the Egyptian business climate and for companies conducting business in Egypt – especially for companies involved with foreign businesses due to increasingly demanding international standards, instruments and review mechanisms. They highlighted some key elements to encourage a clean business environment in Egypt, the obstacles that have held back Egypt in its fight against corruption and the means to overcome them. Participants underlined the available tools that assist businesses in successfully establishing and implementing integrity initiatives, with a special focus on the means for businesses, their associations and industry federations to make valuable contributions to the fight against corruption. Participants also considered concrete ways to improve the integrity of the business climate based on the discussions of the day.

Participants highlighted the need:

- to address the structural obstacles in Egyptian state and government institutions to support business development, building notably on the principles of transparency, participation and accountability;
- to foster a culture of business integrity and compliance, raise public awareness of corruption and the importance of integrity, including through the education and dissemination of integrity principles in schools and universities; and
- for businesses to prepare during the upcoming transition period to act with integrity in order to improve citizens’ and investors’ perception of the Egyptian business climate, as well as to increase business and investment opportunities.

Participants stressed the importance of involving other actors in order to promote a thorough approach to the fight against corruption. They noted particularly:

- that business associations play an important role in defending companies and engaging in advocacy and should therefore be active in restoring the image of business and bring to light Egypt's competitive perimeter;
- that political parties and civil society organisations are new actors with whom communication should be reinforced in order to ensure their involvement in – and their support for – efforts against corruption; and
- that civil society groups may serve as valuable partners in implementing anti-corruption measures.

Looking ahead, participants:

- called for the creation of an Egyptian chapter of the MENA-OECD Business Integrity Network (E.B.I.N.) which would include participants in the roundtable as well as members of the wider Egyptian business community, and which would notably build on members of the Egyptian Junior Business Association and the Federation of Economic Development Associations;
- encouraged synergies among international organizations fighting corruption in Egypt that possess a strong network of local business associations and stakeholders, highlighting in particular the positive role of the Center for International Private Enterprise in Egypt;
- recommended that the E.B.I.N. develop the following outputs in co-operation with local business associations, including:
 - a business compliance tool which would reflect good practices and actions taken in Egypt;
 - a general 'white paper' to be addressed to parties and government;
 - an action plan outlining business and government actions against corruption;
 - a stocktaking of all trainings and further actions taken by businesses and their associations relating to business integrity; and
 - an electronic information-sharing platform to facilitate knowledge-sharing and peer-learning among E.B.I.N. members.
- recommended that the E.B.I.N., with the support of the OECD, engage in a dialogue with key government instances in order to encourage and support anti-corruption and integrity actions;
- called for the support of the business community in establishing a fund to facilitate training efforts by the E.B.I.N.; and
- agreed to organise a follow-up meeting of the E.B.I.N which could be followed by a back to back consultation with representatives of the public sector, civil society and academia in the first quarter of 2012.