

**Opening Remark**  
**(MENA-GfD,Sharm El Sheikh)**

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OECD Co-chair

It is a great honor for me to participate as a co-chair in the Steering Group Meeting of the Good Governance for Development in Arab Countries Initiative. The number of Arab countries participating in this meeting as well as their high level of representation demonstrates the keen interest and emphasis they place on the issue of good governance. It encourages the OECD countries to work more vigorously to cooperate with their Arab counterparts on this question . Ever since I served as the deputy director of the Middle East division of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1984, I have maintained keen interest in the governance issue of the countries in the region. As the reform of governance is an extremely difficult task which requires the change of broad social system, a high level political commitment is indispensable for their progress. From this viewpoint, the Initiative developed by the Arab countries on Good Governance for Development is very encouraging, and I am certain that this will bear enormous fruits in the near future.

The MENA Governance Initiative had a very good launching when it met at a ministerial level in Dead Sea last February. This was followed successfully by the Steering Group meeting held in Madrid this April in which I had the pleasure of attending. It is my understanding that six Working Groups have all met twice to elaborate the relevant issues and that all MENA countries have laboriously prepared Country Action Plans. These will form the basis for the discussion today and tomorrow and provide for further guidelines for the second phase of our work.

I was the Ambassador of Japan to the OECD when the MENA project was first launched. Frankly speaking, it was not an easy start for the OECD. It took some time before all the member governments were persuaded that the OECD should fully cooperate with this. Mr. Richard Hecklinger, who is here to represent the OECD, had a difficult time explaining the value of this project for the OECD countries. I fully supported his work from the

beginning because I was convinced that OECD countries' experiences could best be shared with the Arab countries through the work of the OECD. Today the MENA project covering both the GfD and the Investment is duly recognized in the OECD as it is discussed in such fora as the Governance Committee, the Investment Committee, the Committee for the Cooperation with Non-members as well as in the recent meeting of the Executive Committee in Special Session which was participated by the high level delegates from the capitals. OECD's annual ministerial meeting will be held next week. In conjunction with this ministerial, the OECD Forum which is somehow similar to the World Economic Forum will be organized. There one session will be focused on the MENA project, in which the Japanese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs will make a presentation. It will be an excellent opportunity to give further publicity to the importance of this project.

The government of Japan has been fully supporting the MENA Initiative through financial and human resources contributions. Japan will also continue various bilateral cooperation in the field of governance. And I am honored to serve this important meeting as a co-chair. I am committed to make the utmost efforts in order to produce a positive and tangible result from the meeting. Thank you.