

**SECRETARY GENERAL INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**  
**GOVERNANCE FORUM**

**Meeting the governance challenges for a stronger, fairer and cleaner economy**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished Ministers,**

I am very pleased to be attending the first MENA-OECD Governance Forum. This is indeed an excellent initiative and I thank Minister Abbou for inviting us to gather today in Marrakech before the Ministerial Conference tomorrow.

**Governments' capacities at centre stage**

As we are aware, the global financial and economic crisis has placed governments at centre stage. Having responded effectively to the unprecedented financial crisis of 2008, governments are now striving to exit their critical situations and to put their economies back on track and towards self-sustained growth. At the same time, they are seeking policy solutions to a number of other critical issues such as climate change or poverty.

Today's governments need strong capacities to deal successfully with the challenges ahead. Among the areas of capacity, let me say that good information and accurate analysis are key, because having data and statistics about government activities and performance help us understand

what we are doing and where we stand in terms of performance. They also help governments learn from each other and work with one another.

We are happy to share today with the ministerial delegations our recent publication on “**Governments at a Glance**,” in which we touch on the works of public administrations, or the machinery of government, in the 30 OECD member countries. The objective of this publication is to help policymakers and government staff improve their administrative capacity.

In Government at a Glance, the OECD has compiled years of work, policy exchange and collaboration among its member countries. The starting point for us was four years ago, with the sobering recognition of how little we knew MENTION CONCRETE FIGURES of the way our governments worked from within. And the situation in MENA countries is probably similar, which is why we have started to work with you in building together effective tools for policy monitoring.

### **Progress in public governance in MENA countries**

We are proud to submit tomorrow to the ministerial delegations a draft of **the first OECD Report on the Progress of Governance Reform in the Arab Region**. In this Progress Report, more than forty experiences of success and good practices are explained: experiences in enhancing the economic environment, in strengthening opportunities for citizens and, in brief, in building a better economy through public governance reforms.

This Report shows that reform is possible and MENA Governments have embarked on ambitious processes of modernization, trying to ready the government machinery for development and sustainable economic growth. We are now disseminating these rich experiences as useful tools for policy-

makers in search of good practices and effective policy instruments for implementation. This is an important first step to be followed by other analyses about the ongoing governance reform in the MENA region, in order to cover thoroughly more countries and to evaluate and benchmark performance.

I am very happy that the OECD has played a noticeable role in facilitating these reforms through the MENA-OECD Initiative. We can reinforce our common action to have an impact on good governance. The lessons of the global turmoil we have just experienced are there to remind us that doing business the usual way is no longer possible. Building an economy with a strong sustainable basis - an economy that fights social exclusion and ensures environmental sustainability - requires making the right policy choices today. In this Forum, we will address some key issues that will define the economy of the future and reflect on how good governance frameworks are necessary preconditions for a better economy. Today and tomorrow, we will also be approving future actions and new initiatives, like the E-learning initiative on good governance promoted by Italy, or the programme to support the implementation of the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan.

### **The main governance challenges**

Let me underline some challenges that we can address together:

**First: a public sector enabling the private sector with sound regulations and efficient public services.**

The public sector will have to shape new rules for the private sector, for example through creating a more balanced regulatory framework that keeps abreast of public responsibility and private interest, preventing

excesses and managing risks adequately, without inhibiting entrepreneurship and innovation. To accomplish this, countries need to develop stronger regulatory management systems, including the use of impact analysis, and public consultation when developing new rules and strategies to minimise the burdens from existing rules.

We have been active in the MENA region in this regard, and Ministers from the MENA countries plan to endorse the Regional Charter for Regulatory Quality during tomorrow's Ministerial Conference. I am sure this instrument will play an effective role in accompanying the process of regulatory reform in the region.

Cutting red tape is also key to improved competitiveness. Countries have measured the costs of their burdens and are taking steps to reduce them, with targets of a 25% reduction. We have been contributing to this process and we are proud of presenting today a publication, in the Arabic language, on "Overcoming obstacles to administrative simplification," resulting from this collaboration. Citizens and businesses have much to gain out of this process.

## **Second, a public sector ensuring integrity, transparency and accountability**

Calls for government transparency and accountability have increased, due to the perception that governments were largely inadequate in mitigating or even preventing the financial crisis. The scale of government intervention and government spending that the crisis has induced have only reinforced this tendency, placing integrity at the core of the good governance agenda worldwide. Arab countries have achieved impressive results in the last years in reinforcing institutions, modernizing legal frameworks and building

capacities in this regard. The process of dialogue and networking promoted by the Initiative has been active in sharing practices and exchanging policy tools. We will continue reinforcing this approach as we all have much more to gain with fairer and cleaner economies.

As we know, most Arab and OECD countries have signed the United Nations Convention against Corruption, but implementation of these anti-corruption policies still remain a challenge. Earlier this month, several of us attended the Global Integrity Forum in Doha, and we are proud to acknowledge that the MENA-OECD Initiative **can** play the strategic role of providing the platform for working together to fight corruption. In Morocco, we conducted the first Joint Learning Study on enhancing integrity in public procurement and we are happy to distribute this pioneer study in tomorrow's conference. Other studies will follow providing valuable information to reinforce the action of governments in this domain.

### **Third, public sector's promotion of a more inclusive economy, in particular, enhancing the role of women**

Growth will not be sustainable if it does not reduce inequalities – among them, inequality towards the role of women in the economy. This is a universal challenge in the MENA region and in the OECD countries. Once again, the OECD publication of *Governments at a Glance* has shown that in OECD countries, fewer women are represented at senior levels within central governments than in the wider labour force. This is probably the case in MENA as well and has to oblige us to reflect on the right policies to involve women in the mainstream of the economy and the policy action. I am particularly glad that for this purpose, we are also accompanied by relevant leaders from the civil society.

Arab and OECD member countries met recently in Paris to exchange insights on their gender policies and to discuss how the public sector can better serve the interests of women. This was indeed a very rich exchange and as a result of this, we are presenting in tomorrow's Conference a Programme of Work to mainstream gender in public policies in the MENA region. I am sure that substantive progress will be achieved in the coming years if we implement this Gender Programme of Work with sufficient resources and steady political determination and support.

### **Conclusion: capacities to deliver solutions**

Ladies and gentleman, the machinery of government has to be put at the service of economic performance and growing prosperity for citizens. We know that this is substantially reinforced by sharing policy instruments, good practices and reliable information.

Meeting the governance challenges for a stronger, fairer and cleaner economy is at the center of our priorities and policies. We have an active and effective platform to work together in this direction; let's make certain that future generations will be able to say that we took the right decisions and steps at this critical moment in history.

Thank you for your attention.