



Under the patronage of

H.E. Sheikh Mohamed Bin Essa AL KHALIFA

Regional Workshop on

“STRENGTHENING INTEGRITY IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN ARAB COUNTRIES”

Manama, the Kingdom of Bahrain

16-17 March 2010

CONCLUSIONS

A. Introduction

Under the patronage of H.E. Sheikh Mohammad Bin Essa AL KHALIFA, the Chief Executive of the Bahraini Economic Board, the MENA Investment Centre hosted a regional workshop on “Strengthening Integrity in the Private Sector in Arab Countries” in Manama (Kingdom of Bahrain) on 16-17 March 2010. The workshop was jointly supported by the MENA-OECD Investment Programme, UNDP Bahrain, and UNDP’s Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR). It was attended by representatives of the public sector, the private sector and civil society from Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, in addition to the Chair of the Arab Anti-Corruption & Integrity Network (ACINET), representatives of various regional and international organizations and specialists from OECD countries.

The regional workshop provided an interactive public-private forum for discussion and knowledge sharing on integrity challenges in the private sector and related international standards and best practices. It included a series of plenary sessions followed by two parallel break-out sessions. The first was dedicated to representatives of the public sector and the second to representatives of the private sector and civil society. Within those two break-out sessions, participants discussed ways to enhance the role of government and business in addressing integrity challenges in the private sector, as well as ways to strengthen public-private cooperation in this regard. The role of civil society was also discussed as an important element to advocate and support related efforts.

B. Conclusions

The regional workshop proceeded in accordance with the attached programme. At the end, participants formulated and adopted the following conclusions in light of the various presentations made and the rich discussions during the two days:

1. Integrity in the private sector is a **key component of effective national anti-corruption systems and a prerequisite for stronger, fairer and cleaner economies**. It helps countries attract investment, increase their global competitiveness, and advance their national development efforts, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.
2. Strengthening integrity in the private sector is a challenging multifaceted process that is closely **intertwined with principles of transparent and accountable governance in the public and private spheres**. In this regard, the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), which has been ratified by the vast majority of Arab countries, provides a comprehensive guiding framework that must be utilized by decision-makers in the region, together with other relevant international instruments, such as the OECD Anti-bribery Convention and related Recommendations.
3. In order to respond to business integrity challenges in the region, Arab governments are invited to continue fostering a business-enabling regulatory environment; however, that, alone, will not be sufficient to meet the urgent need for enhanced transparency and integrity. **Governments are invited to adopt and enforce specific anti-corruption measures** in line with applicable international standards and best practices. Areas for immediate attention include anti-bribery mechanisms; conflicts of interest; gift-giving; the utilization of ICT tools in public-private interaction; whistleblower protection; and ombudsman offices.
4. Gaps in coordination between concerned government entities, such as ministries of investment, industry and commerce as well as anti-corruption institutions and law enforcement agencies, hinder productive and sustainable public-private cooperation against corruption. Experience has shown that a **comprehensive national anti-corruption strategy can improve and facilitate public-public coordination** with a view to supporting a more effective outreach to the private sector and civil society.
5. Addressing integrity challenges in the private sector cannot be effective without the **serious commitment and long-term engagement of governments, businesses and society at large**. Accordingly, it is of paramount importance to encourage and support periodic communication and information exchange between these various stakeholders, who should seek to develop mutual trust and a sense of shared responsibility.
6. **The region's private sector will have to become more active in the fight against corruption**. The recent drive towards improving corporate governance is a notable achievement. Businesses are invited to deepen this drive and adopt clear integrity principles, supported by codes of conduct, internal compliance programmes and due diligence. They are also encouraged to enter into integrity pacts in specific sectors and projects with high-corruption risks.
7. The international standards and best practices presented and discussed during the regional workshop, as well as related tools will provide very valuable resources for country-specific action. Accordingly, OECD and UNDP are requested to work with the various concerned actors to collect and present them in a toolkit to be disseminated

across the region. Together with the background paper prepared for the workshop, the referenced toolkit will be the basis of a **specialized regional knowledge product that will be jointly produced by UNDP and OECD.**

8. Existing commonalities among Arab countries and world-wide obligations of investors provide a solid ground for further collective action towards enhanced integrity in the private sector. The **continuation and expansion of the innovative efforts launched during this regional workshop is critical to achieve concrete results**, and would require the inclusion of additional governments and non-governmental actors from Arab countries as well as from OECD countries.
9. The Arab Anti-Corruption & Integrity Network (ACINET) is encouraged to accelerate the establishment of its non-governmental group, which is hoped to **provide a regional platform that can support the conclusions of this workshop**. ACINET and other regional and international instances, notably the MENA Responsible Business Conduct Forum, are invited to consider ways to support additional efforts in this area and contribute to further collective action against corruption.
10. **UNDP and the MENA-OECD Investment Programme are invited to follow up on the conclusions of this regional workshop**, by further facilitating peer-learning and knowledge-sharing among all stakeholders from the region and beyond, and by developing knowledge products and concrete activities at the regional and country levels.

In conclusion, the participants expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the Kingdom of Bahrain, represented by the Bahraini Economic Development Board, and to the speakers and organizers for the efforts that helped make this important activity a success.
