OECD to join Arab states in launching “Good Governance for Development” programme

OECD Secretary General Donald J. Johnston and ministers and senior officials from OECD countries will join heads of government and ministers from Arab states at a conference in Jordan on 6-7 February 2005 for the launch of a major programme to promote good governance for development in the region.

The event, to be opened by H. M. King Abdullah II of Jordan, will inaugurate the programme for “Good Governance for Development in the Arab countries”, or GfD, developed by the states of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) with support from a partnership of the OECD and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It will be held at Al Hussein Bin Talal Convention Centre at the Dead Sea.

The GfD programme has been designed by the Arab states to provide regional support for an ongoing process of governance reform, and to create the conditions needed for economic and social development throughout the region. It was endorsed by 16 Arab states at a ministerial meeting hosted by the Kingdom of Jordan in Amman on 26 September 2004. The programme is being carried out in co-operation with a broad range of regional and multilateral organisations, including the Arab League, World Bank, and European Union, as well as the private sector and civil society.

The GfD Programme will focus on the development and implementation of a series of reform initiatives. Six working groups, each chaired by a MENA country and co-chaired by an OECD country, will provide support for national reform efforts through regional co-operation, and by bringing policy officials in Arab states into contact with a broader international network of their peers.

The working groups will focus on six areas: civil service and integrity; e-government, administrative simplification and regulatory reform; governance of public resources; public service delivery; the role of the judiciary and enforcement; and civil society and the media. A condition of participation is readiness to undertake ambitious policy reforms and to join in a process of monitoring and review by fellow Arab states, supported by counterparts from OECD economies.

This is part of an overall Initiative, led by Arab nations, known as the MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development. The other pillar of this Initiative is an Investment Programme, which aims to improve the attractiveness of the region for foreign investors by addressing such areas as taxation, corporate governance, investment promotion and the transparency of investment policies.

Commenting on the Initiative, Mr. Johnston hailed it as an example of how the OECD can help countries advance towards their economic development goals by drawing on the processes of monitoring and peer review that are the basis for the OECD’s work through its system of specialised committees. “The OECD has many years of experience in using these mechanisms,” the OECD Secretary General said. “We are honoured to be asked by our Arab partners to put this experience at their disposal.”

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