MENA-OECD Working Group on Civil Service and Integrity: “Supporting Corruption Risk Mapping for Effective Integrity Reforms in MENA countries”

18 April 2016 ♦ OECD Conference Centre (Paris, France)

The MENA-OECD Working Group on Civil Service and Integrity met on 18 April 2016 in Paris, France in the context of the 2016 OECD Integrity Week. Chaired by Morocco, Spain and Turkey, the Working Group brings together policy practitioners from MENA and OECD countries to engage in promoting integrity and preventing corruption. It is the leading network to promote a regional dialogue to exchange best practices in the area of civil service reform for integrity, innovative anti-corruption policies and institutions.

RESULTS OF THE MEETING

Building on a decade-long experience and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, the MENA-OECD Governance Programme received a new mandate for 2016-2020 to leverage the power of the regional networks and provide implementation assistance in critical areas such as integrity and fighting corruption. Delivering on the new mandate, this Working Group meeting focused on the key elements for a regional report on internal control and risk management as levers to enhance integrity and tackle corruption in the Middle East and North Africa.

This meeting resulted in:

- **Fostering the regional dialogue** over the key contribution of a robust internal control system as a tool to fight corruption and fraud, and reinforce public sector integrity;
- **Creating a platform** where MENA and OECD countries can share experiences mainstreaming and integrating risk management and internal control processes into day-to-day activities to foster integrity and build more resilient institutions;
- **Identifying the linkages** between internal control, risk management & good and accountable governance;
- **Taking stock of existing** risk management and control frameworks in MENA countries, in order to enrich the regional dialogue and analytical work conducted by the OECD.
PARTICIPATION

The meeting was opened by OECD Deputy Secretary General Douglas FRANTZ and the two-Co-Chairs of the MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Competitiveness for Development:

- H.E. Mr. Kamel AYADI, Minister of Civil Service, Governance and Anti-Corruption, Tunisia & Co-Chair of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme;
- H.E. Ms. Annika MARKOVIC, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the OECD, Sweden & Co-chair of the MENA-OECD Competitiveness Programme.

It was attended by control, audit and anti-corruption policy-makers and experts from MENA and OECD countries, as well as representatives of partner organisations, such as UNDP’s Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET).

Participating countries included Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar and Tunisia with experts from a wide range of public entities such as State Audit Institutions, Anti-Corruption Commissions, Inspectorate Bodies, Ministries of Public Administration, Finance and Budget. The regional dialogues was supported through the input of high level international peers and experts from Germany, France, The Netherlands, Mexico, Chile, US while Tunisia presented the results of its recent collaboration with the OECD on internal control and audit.

INTERNAL CONTROL AND RISK MANAGEMENT AS PILLARS OF INTEGRITY

The Regional Project on Internal Control and Risk Management

Through the MENA Regional Project on Internal Control and Risk Management, launched with financial assistance from the US Department of State, the OECD is supporting MENA countries in enhancing transparent and accountable governance, safeguarding integrity and building government institutions resilient to corruption. The Public Sector Integrity Division of the OECD is currently focusing on identifying common trends and challenges in corruption risk mapping, gather evidence and provide strategic advice to the region.

In this perspective, the meeting provided an opportunity to discuss good practices in internal control and risk management with peers from MENA and OECD countries and launch the stocktaking phase of the regional report. Delegates shared the achievements and challenges on how control and risk processes are implemented within a given national context and provided their input in developing sound and feasible anti-corruption policies, bolstered by robust internal control, audit and risk management systems.

The final session of the meeting consisted in introducing the Survey on MENA Internal Control Frameworks developed to collect data and help countries of the region improve existing legal and institutional frameworks for internal control. While the two first sections of the survey focus on audit and risk management systems, the third part concentrates on the HR and financial arrangements that influence the development and the implementation of internal control systems and anti-corruption policies.

Participants raised questions on key concepts and technical terms as well as the way that they should approach and answer specific survey questions. It was highlighted that there should be more detailed guidance on the terms used in the survey. The relevant explanatory note is providing relevant guidance, and the OECD team is always available to address any questions and provide insight on the completion of the survey. Following the next round of consultations and data collection, the survey will lead to a regional assessment study scheduled to be finalised in October 2016.

Finally, Minister Kamel Ayadi (Tunisia) and Ambassador José Ignacio Wert (Spain & Co-Chair of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme) Ambassador shared some closing remarks and attended the launch of the new OECD Report on “Youth in the MENA Region: How to Bring Them In”.

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Next steps

**Training workshops at the IMF Middle East Center in Kuwait (30 May - 2 June 2016)**

Next steps for the Regional Project include a training workshop organised in collaboration with the IMF Middle East Center for Economics and Finance (Kuwait City, Kuwait) on 30 May - 2 June 2016, with a focus on practical approaches to corruption control and risk management as well as the linkages with effective and accountable public procurement and infrastructure projects.

The course, entitled “Bringing Success by promoting Integrity and Good Governance to your procurement and infrastructure projects”, is addressed to professionals who have experience in control, audit and corruption risk management as well as public procurement and infrastructure projects seeking to enrich their knowledge and capacities to design and implement policies related to integrity and public procurement.

**Regional study and survey (October 2016)**

Further to that, and based on contributions and input from participating countries as well as responses collected through the survey, the OECD Secretariat will pursue the stock-taking exercise through a regional study on internal control and audit – scheduled to be finalised by end 2016. The objective is to identify and address the practical challenges faced by professionals in their efforts to prevent and combat fraud and corruption.

In order to provide contributions to the study, you are kindly invited to complete the survey here (available in French and in English) or circulate it to relevant institutions from your country.

**Regional workshops (Fall 2016)**

The stock-taking regional study will be discussed with participating MENA countries and peers with long field experience in this area, at further regional workshops scheduled to take place in Fall 2016.

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