

Dead Sea Declaration on

Strengthening the Rule of Law and Supporting UNCAC Implementation in the Arab Countries

In the framework of the *Good Governance for Development in the Arab Countries Initiative* (GfD), and upon the invitation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 19 Arab countries¹ convened at the **Regional Conference on Supporting UNCAC Implementation in Arab Countries**, which was held under the patronage of His Excellency the Jordanian Prime Minister at the Dead Sea (Jordan) on 21-23 January 2008. The conference was attended by Ministers of Justice, high-level representatives of judicial authorities and specialized anti-corruption bodies, parliamentarians, and representatives from civil society, the private sector as well as representatives from the League of Arab States, international organizations and regional and international experts.

At the end of the conference and in light of its proceedings, the participants:

RENEWING THEIR COMMITMENT to work to achieve the welfare of their countries' citizens and the advancement of their societies; and to assist in continuing the development of Arab countries striving for stability, growth and a better future for the next generations;

BEARING IN MIND the principles of the "Document on Development, Modernization and Reform", which was adopted by the 16th Arab Summit convened in Tunisia in 2004;

BEARING IN MIND ALSO the Dead Sea Declaration of 2005 on "Good Governance for Development in the Arab Countries Initiative";

EMPHASIZING that Good Governance is central to achieving human development and to the eradication of poverty; and emphasizing their deference to the basic principles of good governance, most important of which are participation, transparency, accountability and the rule of law;

EXPRESSING THEIR AWARENESS that corruption is a major obstacle to human development and economic progress and that it conflicts with the bases and values of the Arab culture, erodes the wealth of their countries, stifles investment, decreases the quality of basic services to citizens, obstructs the rule of law and threatens societies' stability and security;

CONSIDERING that the successes of Arab countries' in public sector and judicial modernization are a step towards additional achievements, especially in relation to strengthening integrity, transparency, accountability and the proper management of public affairs and public property;

STRESSING the importance of cooperation and communication between Arab countries to achieve this goal, especially through supporting an effective and continuous exchange of knowledge, successful experiences and lessons learned between the different governmental and non-governmental bodies concerned with the fight against corruption, including governments, parliamentarians, civil society and the private sector, all in the framework of a genuine and positive partnership;

STRESSING ALSO the importance of international-Arab cooperation in this area, with a view to providing Arab countries with the means to achieve their development goals;

¹ Jordan, UAE, Bahrain, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Oman, Palestinian National Authority, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania and Yemen.

BUILDING ON the various related resolutions and recommendations of the Arab Summit, the Arab Ministerial Councils and the different Arab regional entities;

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION the recommendations of the GfD Steering Group meeting held at Technical Level in Cairo in the Arab Republic of Egypt on 10 September 2007 and the subsequent meeting at Ministerial Level also held in Cairo on 29 November 2007;

DECLARE THAT THEY:

1. Welcome the continuation of the *Good Governance for Development in the Arab Countries Initiative* (GfD) for a second phase extending from 2008 until 2010, and consider it a necessary step to support the efforts of Arab countries in developing and modernizing the public sector, the judiciary and strengthening the rule of law.
2. Commit to work, cooperate and coordinate in order to implement the GfD Programme on the Rule of Law with its two pillars (a) anti-corruption and (b) judicial reform and its four components that have been adopted as key areas for development and modernization during the second phase:
 - Supporting the implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).
 - Building judicial capacity on economic laws.
 - Improving the enforcement of judgments.
 - Strengthening judicial independence and integrity.
3. Call upon Arab countries that have not signed or ratified the UN Convention against Corruption to accede and to work to adopt the model legal and institutional frameworks that have been established by the Convention.
4. Recommend the commencement of work to establish an Arab network that brings together the various governmental bodies that wish to join with the aim of working to support the implementation of the Convention.
5. Recommend the establishment of a parallel network that brings together the non-governmental bodies that wish to join, including civil society organizations, the private sector, parliamentarian, and activists in the field of fighting corruption and promoting transparency and accountability.
6. Work to dedicate effective support to parliaments to help them build capacity to carry out their legislative, oversight and representation functions in the context of supporting the role of parliaments in implementing the Convention.
7. Are convinced of the importance of communication and complementarity between governmental and non-governmental efforts in order to support UNCAC implementation.
8. Recommend the establishment of an Arab group of governmental experts, representing their countries, to begin work towards drafting the charter and rules of procedure for the governmental network, through a coordinated mechanism; and request that the Anti-Corruption Commission of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan hosts the activities of this group in line with the following guidelines:
 - The main objective of the network is to strengthen the capacity of Arab countries to combat corruption through providing a regional platform to support national efforts to implement the Convention, in complementarity with and in support of the Conference of State Parties to the Convention and its secretariat.
 - Joining this network shall be voluntary and does not involve financial obligations.

- Membership shall be open to all Arab governmental bodies concerned with combating corruption.
 - This network shall have mechanisms take to coordinate the network's efforts with other development efforts and to reinforce cooperation and communication with parliamentarians, civil society and the private sector as two essential elements for supporting an efficient and effective drive towards development.
 - The network shall (a) deepen regional policy dialogue and knowledge and capacity building in Arab countries in the various areas of the Convention; (b) contribute to the development of national technical assistance programs to support the implementation of the Convention according to the priorities of each country; (c) foster a mechanism for peer learning and peer advice as well as partnerships at the national, regional and international levels to support the implementation of the Convention; and (d) encourage the development of benchmarks for the region to measure and monitor progress in combating corruption and promoting transparency and accountability in the framework of the Convention.
 - The network shall meet with the parallel non-governmental network in an annual forum in order to promote anti-corruption policy dialogue, to review efforts aimed at implementing the UNCAC, and to develop related action plans for the coming year.
9. Call upon the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to support the establishment and functioning of the two networks, in coordination with the League of Arab States (LoAS).
 10. Call upon Arab and international donor to increase productive cooperation and provide technical and financial support for the GfD Initiative, particularly the project on Supporting UNCAC Implementation in Arab Countries and the recommendations pronounced in this declaration.

In conclusion, participants express their highest gratitude and appreciation for His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Mr. Nader Dahabi for his patronage of the conference, and for the Jordanian Minister of Justice, Mr. Ayman Odeh for his leadership of the Programme on the Rule of Law (anti-corruption and judicial reform) and for his great efforts that have helped make this conference a success.

Participants also express their thanks to UNDP, UNODC and OECD for the great support they have provided so far, hoping that coordination continues and increases to serve development in the Arab countries.

Dead Sea, 23 January 2008