

2nd Annual Meeting

Anti-Corruption Community of Practice in the Arab Region

Gamart, Tunisia

25-26 June 2009

Statement on behalf of UNDP's Regional Bureau for Arab States

Your Excellency Minister in Charge of Civil Service and Administrative Development, Dr. Zouhair M'DHAFFAR,

Your Excellency, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Tunisia, Dr. Mohammed BELHOCINE,

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Colleagues, partners and friends,

On behalf of UNDP's Regional Bureau for the Arab States and its regional Programme on Governance in the Arab Region, I would like to welcome you to the second annual meeting of the Anti-Corruption Community of Practice in the Arab region, and would like to extend on your behalf our appreciation for the government and people of Tunisia for their hospitality and support.

Last year in Beirut, most of you joined us in an effort to establish and consolidate a regional community that may contribute to expanding and deepening anti-corruption work in the Arab States in line with the UN Convention against Corruption and in order to further efforts aimed at reducing poverty, realizing the Millennium Development Goals and promoting sustainable development.

Today, here in Tunisia, we see that we succeeded in consolidating this Community, but we also realize that this achievement is only the beginning and

hope that we this region may provide good examples of country-regional-global synergies in the effort to address the many challenges of corruption.

Colleagues,

Strengthening good governance is a key entry point to achieving the objectives that I have just set above; and since anti-corruption, as we identify it in UNDP, is a “governance deficit” that undermines governance reforms and subsequently threatens human security and human development, it becomes our role, even our professional duty to support partner countries in their efforts to develop and implement anti-corruption activities.

We are very optimistic to see a number of Country Offices and national counterparts working together to address various anti-corruption issues, and we hope to see these efforts grow and flourish in the future. In this framework, we will continue working with our colleagues in DGG/BDP to provide all the support that we can to present and future country-level activities.

Several opportunities present themselves in this region for anti-corruption programming and I would like to stress two:

1. **The wide ratification of the UNCAC as a framework for governance and anti-corruption reforms:** 14 Arab States have ratified the UNCAC with 4 additional signatories. While it is true that UNCAC ratification by a certain state does not necessarily mean the actual implementation of the norms and standards provided therein, it is still a formal indication of the acceptance of a certain degree of accountability in the eye of its peers, and more importantly its citizens and hence an entry point for governance and anti-corruption reform.
2. **The establishment of a unique Arab-owned platform for anti-corruption reforms – the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET):** After more than a year of regional and country-level consultations and a number of policy-level workshops, heads and senior officials from anti-corruption

authorities from 16 Arab countries declared the launching of the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET) in Amman (Jordan) on 30 July 2008. This Arab-led process is supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – through its regional Programme on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR) – in coordination with a number of regional and global actors including the League of Arab States (LoAS), UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Today, ACINET stands as a unique regional platform for policy dialogue, knowledge sharing and capacity development in the area of anti-corruption. It is also a permanent forum that brings together state and non-state actors with a view to fostering collective and inclusive action against corruption. Although still in its early phase of activity, ACINET, in the comparatively short period of its establishment, has proved to be an active forum for knowledge sharing and the identification of normative and capacity gaps.

I stressed those two points to highlight the visible increase in political commitment and the clear mandate that UNDP has, together with UNODC, to support *de jure* and *de facto* UNCAC implementation, as two key driving forces for future anti-corruption programming and assistance in the region, which faces increasing challenges in the area of human security and human development.

Corruption prevention is key. Anti-corruption education is important. And enforcement is necessary to reinforce credibility. However, those three broad types of interventions must not be separated; in fact, they must be viewed as complementary.

In this context, I want to highlight two programming areas, which provide clear examples, of linkages between prevention and enforcement.

The first is the role of the judiciary including judicial integrity and its capacity to investigate and prosecute corruption and enforce judicial decisions in this regard.

The second is the role of witness and whistleblower protection systems, which are a cornerstone of an anti-corruption system and a clear area of intersection between prevention and enforcement.

Our regional programme dedicated a regional workshop to address the second issue. It was held in Rabat on 2-3 April 2009 and we will continue to support work in this area for the future. And tomorrow, in the context of this meeting, we will address the first issue.

Finally, I want to say that we will be looking forward to work with you and in close coordination with our partners, including our partners in UNODC, OECD, the League of Arab States and other organizations, which we will work with to reinforce our cooperation. In this regard, I would like to extend a special welcome to the representatives of UNODC, OECD, the League of Arab States, the World Bank, GTZ and the representative of the U.S. Government, whose contributions and support has been instrumental to the success that we all share today.

We really look forward for fruitful discussions in those coming two days and promise to pursue cooperation and coordination to maximize our support to partner countries across the Arab region.

Thank you for your attention and welcome in Tunisia.

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