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Sixth meeting of the

Anti-Corruption Community of Practice in the Arab Region

"Anti-Corruption and Local Governance"

Beirut, Lebanon

28-29 June 2013

PROGRAMME

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I. BACKGROUND

1.   More than two years have passed since the Arab region entered the newest phase of its modern history. Triggered by a wave of political transformations that continues to impact daily life across the region, albeit in different forms and shapes, this phase seems to be laden with unique opportunities to advance democratic governance reforms, but also with multifaceted challenges that may undermine this drive. While it is true that these reforms are not new to the region, it is clear that new approaches and tools need to be considered and adopted in order to better respond to the particularities of the new situation, which among other things, is calling attention to the importance of promoting public participation in decision-making, focusing on the empowerment of marginalized groups, particularly youth and women, as well as to the equitable and effective delivery of public services to citizens, particularly at the local level outside major urban centers. The presence of corruption can be seen both as a reason for, and a result of, the lack of focus on those two aspects in the past.

2.   Indeed, in addition to the resounding call for additional freedoms and social justice, the peoples of the region, at least in most of the Arab countries, have clearly placed corruption at the forefront of their expressed grievances. Consequently, governments, especially those that have emerged as a result of the transformations, have placed anti-corruption on the top of their priorities. Civil society, with its relatively growing space for voice and action, has also moved towards further engagement in this area. Many development partners have also began to play a more active role in supporting related reform efforts. Certainly, one can observe a great change in attitudes and behaviors in the region in terms of the recognition of the corruption problem and the extent of engagement against it. Most people would argue, however, that this change, despite some of the progresses achieved, has yet to reap concrete results that citizens can feel in their daily lives.

3.   As time progresses, reform actors in the Arab Countries are going to be faced with increasing public pressure to achieve more concrete results in confronting corruption. This will require a broad integrated approach that does not only deal with corruption after it has occurred, but also seeks to prevents its occurrence, and enhance citizen trust in the State. It will also require a focus on promoting this approach at the local level, where citizens feel it the most. Among other things, this will require a more decisive movement towards promoting transparency and empowering citizens through social accountability mechanisms. Indeed, this approach is inherent to the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), which 18 Arab countries have committed to implement. In Article 10, it calls upon governments to adopt public reporting measures as well as enable better access to information by citizens. In article 13, it calls for increasing the role of society in preventing and fighting corruption through a number of different measures.

4.   The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been at the forefront of providing anti-corruption assistance to Arab countries in recent years in various shapes and forms, as part of its broader effort to promote democratic governance. Examples include assistance in formulating and implementing national anti-corruption strategies, developing the capacities of anti-corruption agencies, supporting participatory UNCAC self-assessments, empowering civil society organizations, enhancing the technical skills of public officials, and creating open spaces for inclusive policy dialogue on anti-corruption reforms. With its regional project on "Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries" (ACIAC), the steadily growing engagement of its Country Offices (COs) and regional Community of Practice (CoP), UNDP is likely to continue to be a major source of anti-corruption assistance in the Arab region in the years to come, while also offering a platform at the regional and country levels to reinforce other bilateral and multi-lateral anti-corruption efforts promoted by other development partners and technical assistance providers, including the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

II.   THEMATIC FOCUS

5.   While it is true that corruption is found in rich and poor countries alike, and is not limited to a specific sector or community, the problem is usually more prevalent in the absence of well-designed transparency and accountability mechanisms that are not only essential to addressing corruption but also to setting the rhythm of performance. Since it has broken its taboo status in the Arab region, a few years ago, corruption is rapidly emerging as a major area for programming. The transformations that the region is witnessing are further amplifying the need for such programming.

6.   UNDP, however, recognizes that the movement towards achieving comprehensive anti-corruption reforms in the region requires the active engagement of all the players (governments, civil society, the business community, and the international community) as well as concerted action at the centralized/national level and the decentralized/local level. It also recognizes that achieving progress depends on the formulation and implementation of a broader vision that is aimed at promoting democratic governance. This vision continues to be lacking in many countries, thus risking fragmentation that hinders the effectiveness of related activities and the sustainability of expected strategic results.

7.   At the moment, the growth in anti-corruption programming in the region does not seem to have trickled down to the local level yet. Most of the current focus, and perhaps understandably so, is being dedicated to centralized mechanisms at the national level, such as national anti-corruption agencies, broad anti-corruption legislations, and prosecution of specific cases. Even in countries that have adopted clear national anti-corruption strategies, the reference to local governance is almost completely absent. On the other hand, reforms of local governance mechanisms, and even local development initiatives, are yet to witness an adequate integration of accountability, transparency, and integrity mechanisms from an anti-corruption perspective. This is despite the fact that the presence of corruption has been documented and widely perceived as a major problem at the local level, noting that local governance is the largest interface between the citizens and the State, and continues to be the main recipient of financial aid whether from national or international sources.

8.   For this reason, the 6th meeting of UNDP's Anti-Corruption Community of Practice in the Arab region is bringing focus on the nexus between anti-corruption and local governance given the potentials for mutual reinforcement and the positive implications for the development agenda and then daily life of citizens. The meeting will explore the prospects of programming on anti-corruption in local governance in a way that adds to the ongoing endeavors to promote anti-corruption, as well as broader democratic governance reforms, while also exploring specific tools and methodologies, and seeking to promote synergies and complementarities with development partners and stakeholders working on integrating accountability, transparency and integrity in local governance.

9.   This is particularly relevant given the characteristics exhibited by the current status of both anti-corruption reforms and local governance reforms. First, anti-corruption efforts have generally been unable to reduce negative perceptions by the public and the business community, and while they are achieving more and more success in introducing legislative changes, the implementation of these laws is still limited, especially at the local level. Second, local governance efforts, and in parallel to its grappling with the slow pace of the implementation of related reforms, the bias to the technical elements of decentralization, and the inability to produce a coherent local governance approach, especially in conflict-affected situations, it has been unable to properly integrate components of support for broad-based citizen participation, or accountability, transparency and integrity.

III.   OBJECTIVES

10.   The overall aim of the meeting is to introduce anti-corruption in local governance into UNDP's anti-corruption programming in the Arab region through developing the capacities of the members of the regional Community of Practice and enabling them to identify synergies between the two service areas towards a more integrated approach in preventing corruption. More specifically, the meeting seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- Provide an interactive platform to share knowledge on respective efforts in the area of anti-corruption programming in the past year;

- Enable in-depth analysis of corruption in local governance contexts;

- Explain the concepts and practices of anti-corruption in local governance and how it fits within UNDP's work;

- Promote and interactive exchange of expertise and experiences on anti-corruption in local governance from the region and beyond;

- Identify entry points and challenges of programming on anti-corruption at local level in the Arab countries, as well as linkages with current anti-corruption efforts, and possible synergies with other areas of democratic governance;

- Explore the possible role of different stakeholder, particularly the civil society in anti-corruption in local governance; and

- Foster synergies that can be developed with other development partners and technical assistance providers.

IV.   PARTICIPANTS

11.   Participants include leading democratic governance and anti-corruption practitioners from UNDP Country Offices in Arab countries, as well as UNDP experts from the Regional Bureau of Arab States and the Bureau for Development Policy in addition to a selected group of independent experts and national counterparts including governmental and non-governmental experts. Representatives of regional and international organizations and other development partners and technical assistance providers are also expected to join the meeting.

V.   METHODOLOGY

12.   The meeting is designed to deliver particular learning objectives in an interactive manner over a period of two days. It will include (i) plenary presentations with Q&As and open discussions to exchange information, clarify concepts, and share experiences; and (ii) small-group discussions to enable participants to consider the application of acquired knowledge in their respective countries. The working languages will be Arabic and English with simultaneous interpretation in both languages.

VI.   AGENDA

Friday, 28 June 2013

08.30 – 09.00	**Registration**

09.00 – 10.45	**First Session – plenary**

From Amman to Beirut: Updates on UNDP's Anti-Corruption Work

Objective: To enable participants to share updates about their respective anti-corruption efforts in the Arab states as well receive updates about the progress of anti-corruption efforts in the context of the regional and global programmes.

- **Opening Remarks**
  Mr. Luca RENDA, Country Director, UNDP Lebanon
- **Updates on UNDP's Anti-Corruption Work in the Arab Region**
  Mr. Arkan EL SEBLANI, Manager, UNDP's Regional Project on Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (UNDP-ACIAC)
  Mr. Anga TIMILSINA, Manager, Global Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development Effectiveness, UNDP
- **Updates from UNDP CO representatives**

10.45 – 11.00	**Break**

11.00 – 13.00	**Second Session – plenary**

Corruption at the Local Level and Links to Democratic Governance Reforms

Session Objective: Introduce corruption in local governance to enrich participants' technical knowledge on possible existing open windows of vulnerable areas in local governance within the overall governance system enabling participants to explore the concepts and practices of local governance transparency and accountability.

- **Moderator**
  Mr. Anga TIMILSINA, Manager, Global Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development Effectiveness, UNDP
- **Panelists**
  Mr. Imad SAED, Consultant, UNDP's Regional Project on Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (UNDP-ACIAC)
  Mr. Kodjo E. MENSAH-ABRAMPA, Policy Advisor - Local Governance, DGG/BDP, UNDP
  Mr. Fredrik ERIKSSON, Independent Anti-Corruption Specialist
- **Open Discussion**

13.00 – 14.00	Lunch

14.00 – 15.30	**Third Session – plenary**

Challenges and Opportunities for Corruption Prevention at the Local Level: Comparative Experiences in Anti-Corruption and Local Governance Reforms

Session Objective: Enable participants to explore comparative experiences and effective tools and mechanisms in promoting accountability, transparency, and integrity at the local level, while identifying opportunities and challenges for programming on anti-corruption in local governance.

- **Moderator**
  Mr. Kodjo E. MENSAH-ABRAMPA, Policy Advisor – Local Governance, DGG/BDP, UNDP
- **Panelists**
  Mr. Gerardo BERTHIN, Policy Advisor - Local Governance, UNDP Panama Regional Centre
  Ms. Shaima HUSSEIN, Policy Specialist, Access to Justice and Rule of Law, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP
  Mr. Charles MAKUNJA, Governance Advisor, UNDP Sudan
- **Open Discussion**

15.30 – 16.00	Break

16.00 – 17.30	**Fourth Session – plenary**

Role of Different Stakeholders in Preventing Corruption at the Local Level

Session Objective: Explore the possible role of different stakeholders, particularly civil society organizations in promoting accountability, transparency and integrity in local governance towards efficient public oversight mechanisms in light of existing capacities, tools, and partnerships.

- **Moderator**
  Ms. Shaima HUSSEIN, Policy Specialist, Access to Justice and Rule of Law/ Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP
- **Panelists**
  Ms. Gehan ANAN, Senior Statistician and Indicator Specialist, Local Development Observatory, Local Administration Reform Unit at Ministry of Local Development, Egypt
  Mr. Hussein HASSAN, Director of the Anti-Corruption Project, MENA, UNODC
  Ms. Nancy FASHHO, Project Specialist, UNDP Jordan
- **Open Discussion**

19.30	Social Event

	For further information and registration, please contact the organizers.

Saturday, 29 June 2013

09.00 – 10.30	**Fifth Session – plenary**
	Programming on Anti-Corruption at the Local Level
	Session Objective: Summarize the findings of the first day and discuss the status of local governance and anti-corruption programming in Arab Countries while exploring possible entry points for programming on anti-corruption at the local level and possible opportunities and challenges in participating countries.

- **Moderator**
  Mr. Fredrik ERIKSSON, Independent Anti-Corruption Specialist
- **Panelists**
  Mr. Arkan EL SEBLANI, Manager, UNDP's Regional Project on Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (UNDP-ACIAC)
  Mr. Anga TIMILSINA, Manager, Global Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development Effectiveness, UNDP
  Mr. Gerardo BERTHIN, Policy Advisor - Local Governance, UNDP Panama Regional Centre
- **Open Discussion**

10.30 – 13.00	**Sixth Session – working group**
	Brainstorming and Exercises
	Session Objective: Support participants in round table discussions to develop ideas on promoting accountability, transparency and integrity at the local level with a focus on the role of all relevant players and the identification of required local governance and anti-corruption tools.

- **Two working groups:** UNDP COs and Civil Society
- **Moderators**
  Mr. Imad SAED, Consultant, UNDP's Regional Project on Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (UNDP-ACIAC)
  Mr. Arkan EL SEBLANI, Manager, UNDP's Regional Project on Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (UNDP-ACIAC)
- **Presentations in plenary**

13.00 – 14.00	**Lunch**

14.00 – 16:00	**Closing Session**
	Recommendations and the Way Forward

> ***Session Objective:*** *identify programming entry points at the country-level and synergies with ACIAC and PACDE.*

- **Presentation of linkages with ongoing activities**
  Mr. Imad SAED, Consultant, UNDP's Regional Project on Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (UNDP-ACIAC)
- **Moderated Discussion**
  Mr. Arkan EL SEBLANI, UNDP's Regional Project on Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries (UNDP-ACIAC)

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