

Speech by Mr. Yakup Beris Regional Programme Adviser, Regional Bureau for Arab States, UNDP

Your excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be with such a distinguished audience today, representing a diverse set of countries in the region.

Before anything else, I would like to thank our host, the Moroccan government, for the great hospitality. It is so kind of you, your Excellency Abouddrar, to have all of us here today. Hosting such an event in Morocco is a testimony to the commitment of Morocco to regional cooperation and the anti-corruption and integrity agenda.

I would like to also thank the League of Arab States for being here with us today and for the continued collaboration on a wide range of issues with UNDP. Your presence, Mr. Ben Khadra, encourages us to further pursue regional cooperation through this partnership.

Of course, I also would like to thank all of you, excellences, ladies and gentlemen, for joining us today, sparing your precious time from your busy schedules and traveling to take part in this event.

We are here today to discuss a way forward for our ongoing regional work on anti-corruption and integrity. Our ongoing work, which you are familiar with, is part of our regional programme that has a focus on four critical outcome areas: inclusive growth, inclusive governance, gender, and social cohesion. Our regional programme flows from UNDP's Strategic Plan, covering a period of 2014 to 2017.

These four outcome areas are underpinned by two interlinked themes: Inclusion and resilience. The anti-corruption and integrity agenda relates to both. It relates to inclusion as all the related work promotes making information available to ordinary citizens and allowing them to act on this information if corruption practices or risks prevail. It relates to resilience as this agenda is actually a reform agenda for the public and private institutions to make them stronger, while eliminating the risks of corruption that weaken state and non-state institutions, making them vulnerable to shocks.

Having these broader linkages in mind, we would like to build on the successes and lessons learned from the past work, but especially from the last 3 years through this Project. Between 2011 and 2014, ACIAC supported anti-corruption and integrity reforms in Arab countries, with varying degrees, and with much more remaining to be done. Our work focused on the anti-corruption agencies, on assisting them to establish cooperation with sectorial authorities. We will hear about successful stories in Jordan and Morocco, among others, on this particular angle.



We are also proud to support the work of the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network (ACINET), which has grown to include more than 65 governmental and non-governmental bodies from 17 Arab countries. On this occasion, I would like to commend Morocco and Lebanon for their leadership of the Network in the past two years and congratulate Tunisia for being selected to take on the leadership next year. Today, thanks to the efforts of many of you in the room, and many others across the region, ACINET has been an important participatory mechanism for capacity development, information sharing and policy dialogue against corruption in the Arab countries.

In doing all of these, we worked with our own Country Offices to maximize the quality of assistance available to stakeholders in Arab countries. The complementarities and synergies between our regional programme and country programmes will be essential to keep the momentum we have achieved so far.

Of course, doing these, we were not alone. We acknowledge, with appreciation, the financial contributions by the Governments of the United States, Belgium, Canada and France, as well as the Siemens Integrity Initiative (SII). We have also been cooperating with various regional and international organizations, including the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the League of Arab States (LAS), among others.

Having all these on the table, and with the linkages with the broader regional programme work in mind, it is time now to think about what's next. In the next phase, as UNDP, we are committed to build on previous efforts in order to support the traditional anti-corruption stakeholders, and also empower and engage new ones. Expanding on these, we would like to support concrete solutions to reduce integrity challenges and corruption risks in key vulnerable sectors that are critical for development. This will allow us to establish stronger linkages to the transparency and accountability agenda- of which anti-corruption and integrity lie at the core.

For us, the best way to design the next phase would be to listen to you and receive the feedback from you, the champions of this agenda in the region. When I look at the participants in this event, I see an immense conjoining of expertise and experience that only humbles people like me. With this humility, if, with your guidance, we can take a baby step to facilitate your vision and work, we will leave this meeting very proud.

With this in mind, I kindly invite everyone to take an active part in the discussions, and help us design our next steps to the best benefit of this region.

Thank you

