

**Draft address by**

**The Ambassador of Sweden to the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain Mr. Jan Thesleff  
at the Official Opening of the UNDP Regional Conference on Public Administration in the Arab  
States: How to achieve effective and accountable public administration in the Arab region?**

**26-28 October 2015, Dead Sea (Marriott Hotel), Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**

- Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.
  - It is indeed a great honor to address the UNDP Regional Conference on Public Administration in the Arab States.
  - My special thanks go to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, our hospitable host country, and in particular to H.E. the Minister for Public Sector Development Dr. Khleef Al Khawahldeh, present here today.
  - I would also like to extend my gratitude to the UNDP, both at headquarters and at regional level, for investing human and financial resources in the hitherto underexamined, but crucial, area of the role of Public Administration in the evolution of the Arab World.
  - My gratitude also goes to the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) of Sweden for the excellent work you have done in elaborating guidelines and recommendations, that will most certainly benefit many also in this region.
  - The list could be made long, but let me still just mention a few crucial - key - individuals:  
Dr. Zena Ali Ahmed, UNDP Country Director;  
Mr. Khaled Abdelshafi, Director of the UNDP Regional Hub (who spoke right before me),  
Mr. Patrick Keulers, the driving force in establishing the close cooperation between the UNDP and my country, Sweden, and the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA).
  - Last but not least, I would like to thank all of you present here. I am well aware that for many of you it is not an easy journey to make it to this event – you are brave and committed – and I want to especially commend you.
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- Democracy and sustainable development presupposes three essential elements: transparency, accountability and equality.

- Transparency denotes access to governmental decisions and sources.
  - Accountability entails being held responsible for choices and actions.
  - Finally, the concept of equality includes citizens being treated equally under the law and in the application of laws, rules and regulations.
  - Actually, transparency and accountability are intimately linked. Transparency, enables citizens, civil society and other stakeholders in a country, to clearly see and understand the structure and function of government and administration, which of course is a prerequisite for enforcing accountability.
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- The role of the social contract between the state and the citizen in The Arab World is evolving. The region is far from static on any level. Even the most stable countries are facing new challenges as regional economics and thereby societies are challenged by lower commodity prices. Economies and societies, in the Middle East and in Europe are also coming under pressure as the refugee and IDP issues become more pressing, minute by minute. And of course, we all know and are painfully aware of the armed conflicts and extremist movements that plague parts of this region.
- Yet, strengthening the social contract between the state and the citizen through transparent and accountable decision-making is key, in ensuring resilient reform processes. Nowhere is this more evident than in the area of public administration, where the individual meets the state in action and where targeted and meaningful technical assistance plays a significant part.
- Trust is built through a predictable and accountable administration where decisions are taken based on legal certainty and follow a clear set of procedures. In essence, there are needs for respect for the legitimate expectations of citizens. But how to actively and concretely assess these levels of trust, is the question we have to ask ourselves?
- Public Administration Reform ensures that the important decisions reached at the political level become reality through provision of technical assistance for reform processes and strengthening of responsive governance. Reform processes, just as government and administration, must be transparent and based on equality, otherwise they are not likely to be respected and fully implemented.
- We should put emphasis on embracing new and innovative ways of moving forward and being more responsive and accountable.
- Developing governance indicators to measure progress on the Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16: Peace, Justice and strong Institutions) is one such

way. Ensuring that there is respect – and demand – for principles of the rule of law in public service delivery is another.

- The capacity and role of public administration in fragile settings is central to building stable, just and inclusive societies that can sustain peace in the long term. Yet, timing needs to be right, and we should be cautious in applying blanket solutions – importance of not only national ownership, but national leadership throughout, must be stressed.
- Being inclusive is key. Our civil societies are evolving. Individuals join collective groups virtually in a way, never witnessed before. Social media give citizens immediate access to information, that previously was out of reach. It is a challenge. But most of all a blessing.
- Countries can certainly learn from others' best practices. Today is such an opportunity. One size does not fit all – we all know that. But I am convinced that this important gathering will allow us – under the auspices of the UNDP and our host country, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and with the experience of the Swedish Folke Bernadotte Academy – to network, exchange information in order to tailor solutions: suitable, workable and acceptable to us all.
- Thank you.