

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Your Excellencies,

Your Highness,

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like in the beginning of this meeting to express my sincere thanks and feelings of consideration to the ministers who accepted our invitation and especially their support to this first meeting which comes within the framework of following “The Initiative of Rational Administration Serving the Development in the Arab Countries”.

I would like also to welcome all participants in this meeting from Arab countries, the United Kingdom which participates with Tunisia in the presidency of the Working Group and the responsables and the experts from the Unites Nations Development Programme and the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development which support the Initiative.

It is also my distinct honour to convey to you the greetings of His Excellency President Zinelabidine Ben Ali, who insists on reform initiatives and modernisation in the Arab world. He is sure that reform is the unique way to catch up with the developed world as it was confirmed in the modernisation and reform sheet issued at the Tunis Summit in May 2004.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Each reform in the Arab world needs to put into effect certain aspects that are good governance, reinforcement of the state of law and institutions, ensuring human rights and disseminating the culture of tolerance.

Since the public administration is the mechanism of implementing policies, its reform is fundamental for its modernisation.

Starting from this point, our meeting today has great importance since it is going to be the opening meeting for several ones which are going to be held in the next three years.

This meeting is also the first one which is organised on the level of the six Meeting Groups which were formed for this Initiative as a result of the meeting which was proposed by the Spanish Foreign Minister on April, the 28th 2005. In this meeting, roles and schedules for further meetings were distributed among the Working Groups.

Therefore, this meeting really represents a real starting point for “The Initiative of Rational Administration” and a good opportunity for Arab countries to exchange experiences and expertise related to the main focus of the 4th Meeting Group. The latter looks for ways to provide public services and partnership between the public and private sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tunisia believes well in the principles of “The Initiative of Rational Administration” as an imperative solution for development and modernisation to improve the performance of public services in a very competitive world in which public services represent an efficient element in the competitive capacities.

The president Zinelabidine Ben Ali focuses that Tunisia participates side by side with neighbouring Arab countries to establish traditions in exchanging experiences and to be inspired by the experiences of structures of the United Nations Development Programme and those of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development.

Our main goal is that each country succeeds in establishing national programmes aiming at developing public administration and empowering its performance and efficiency. We also look for deepening the basis of integrity, transparency and accountability with respect to social, cultural and economic features of each country and the pace of reform.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Administrative reforms in Tunisia witnessed clear improvement in these last years, especially after joining the World Trade Organisation and signing “The Association Agreement with the European Union” in 1995. Along with this, Tunisian administration started a comprehensive upgrading programme which covers all economic and social aspects in the country.

Thanks to special Presidential care, our public administration managed to achieve a qualitative shift, enabling Tunisia to have a good rank in the international public administration classification, issued by special international institutions whether in terms of transparency of procedures or shortening the period needed to set up companies.

Tunisia insists on supporting the prerequisites of modern administration which relies on the following basis:

- A firm and operative administration
- An administration close to citizens
- An administration mastering information technology
- An administration open to its economic, social and cultural environment

In this context appears the contribution of the private sector in providing services which has a direct effect on the daily life of citizens in fields such as education, health, transportation, communication, sanitation and energy.

Tunisia also works for the reinforcement of partnership between the private and the public sector by providing better public service facilities in an efficient way in terms of costs and quality services provided.

As a result Tunisia has introduced certain reforms in order to reduce the interventions of the state in the economic and social life, thus giving more chances to the private sector to be more involved in these fields through privatisation, subcontracting and concessions.

We introduced certain legal and institutional reforms in order to cope requirements of involvement of the private sector in providing public services along with ensuring transparency, responsibility and equity.

Nowadays Tunisia has reached a new stage in the social and economic development that necessitates more partnership between the two sectors to attain national goals.

Your Excellencies,

Your Highness,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the Dead Sea Conference we diagnosed certain obstacles to our Initiative among which we mention:

- Complex legal framework
- Monopoly in certain sectors
- Lack of qualified personnel
- Many Arab countries do not have enough knowledge of the tools and means of improving this kind of partnership

Experts agreed on suggesting certain axes that ought to be focused on and to be given higher priorities in order to promote partnership between the public and the private sector.

These issues are related to:

- Clarifying partnership policies and specific roles, and its goals
- Improving legal and organisational partnership frameworks and insisting on a minimum level of stability in these rules
- Improving and restructuring related bodies
- Improving dialogue between partners in both sides
- Establishing transparency in organising private sector participation
- Ensuring competitive requirements

- Reinforcing cooperation and expertise exchange in the fields of partnership between the private and the public sector in the Arab and leading countries as well
- Improving information systems and the spread of specific knowledge about techniques and modes of the private sector participation
- Setting up observatory systems to detect successful experiences
- Setting a special programme for training and forming qualified personnel in this field

In this meeting we listed certain fields in which the public and the private sector can cooperate together, such as water distribution, irrigation, environment preservation, production and distribution of traditional energy and renewable energies and investment in communication infrastructure.

Within the next two days we will have the opportunity to focus more on ideas and suggestions which were mentioned in the Dead Sea closing meeting. We will also have further knowledge of Arab countries experiences and those of OECD countries to see the ways to benefit from them.

In addition to that, we will work for setting the priorities for the next meeting and precisising financial and technical support that may be provided for Arab countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your presence today signifies that you strongly support this Initiative. I am aware that we made a significant step today towards reform and modernisation in our countries. It is a reform that emanates from our priorities and that is based on wisdom and on successful experiences in each country known for the efficiency of its public administration.

Finally, I would like to, once again, thank all of you for your presence and effective contribution in this meeting. I hope you enjoy your stay in Tunisia.

Thank you for your attention.