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Republic of Lebanon

Fourth Conference of the  
Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network

**"Reconciling Hopes with Realities in the  
Fight against Corruption: Paving the Way for  
Innovation"**

Intercontinental Phoenicia Hotel

Beirut, Republic of Lebanon

14-16 April 2013

Speech by UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident  
Representative in Lebanon

**Mr. Robert WATKINS**

**Excellency the Prime Minister of Lebanon;**

**Excellencies and Honorable officials of Arab countries and partner countries;**

**Ladies and gentlemen;**

It is both a pleasure and an honor for me to join you today in opening the Fourth Conference of the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network.

I wish to begin by expressing my gratitude, on behalf of the United Nations, to H.E the Prime Minister for his patronage of this regional forum and personal commitment to the important issue of fighting corruption. I also wish to thank all of you for joining us in this discussion of one of the most significant challenges facing the countries of our region.

Though it may seem obvious, the question sometimes arises, why do we care so much about corruption? The answer is rooted in common sense, universal values and years of empirical evidence across countries and cultures.

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan elaborated the cruel effects of corruption during the General Assembly's adoption of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in 2003, from bribery and fraud to money laundering and extortion, from kickbacks and clientelism, to embezzlement and the abuse of public position, when he said:

"Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a government's ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice, and discouraging foreign investment and aid." The current Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, has added that not only does corruption erode public trust in government, it quite literally takes lives when life-saving services are not available as a result.

The World Bank has shown that efforts to tackle corruption and improve the rule of law can increase national incomes by as much as four

times in the long-run. And the Asian Development Bank estimates that corruption can destroy up to 17% of a nations' GDP. The full impact, however, is greater than the diversion of resources, as corruption erodes trust in government and poisons the bonds of society itself.

For these reasons, UNDP has sought to counter corruption for nearly three decades, guided by the United Nations Convention against Corruption. Our strategy encompasses coordinated action at the global, regional and country levels, developing national capacities, promoting south-south cooperation and helping ensure that anti-corruption reforms are more effective, enduring and integrated into national development agendas.

Our Global Programme on Anti-Corruption for Development Effectiveness (PACDE) has helped support organizations in many of the countries here today, while the UNDP Regional Project on Anti-Corruption and Integrity in the Arab Countries presents an effective framework for cross-border and regional cooperation, paying particular attention to seven signatories: Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen.

At the country level, UNDP's anti-corruption activities have evolved significantly. In Lebanon, for example, UNDP helped develop a national Strategy to combat corruption in close coordination with Government, parliament, Civil Society Organizations and Media. Sectoral anti-corruption studies are also being developed together with the Parliament for the Health, Education and Water sectors.

And today, we welcome the work of the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network, which has become the region's leading multi-stakeholder mechanism for cooperation against corruption since its establishment in 2008.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this time of difficult transitions in many Arab countries, it is our responsibility to come together to support transparent and accountable

government institutions, taking heed of the significant role that popular discontent with corruption played in setting the stage for uprisings.

While governments have a central role to play in this regard through legislation, oversight and maintaining a commitment to the institutions and obligations of democratic governance, Civil Society Organizations, the Private Sector and media also have important roles to play, in holding both government and themselves accountable to the public.

In this regard, I am pleased to note that we have been witnessing in this region unprecedented levels of new commitments to the anti-corruption agenda in recent years, with 17 Arab countries now committed to the implementation of the UNCAC, while 15 Arab countries are actively engaged in the work of the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network.

Against such a background, this conference presents an excellent opportunity to exchange knowledge and compare experiences among Arab Countries eager to reduce the gap between the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of the region and their lived daily realities.

In closing, I wish to reiterate my sincere thanks to the government of Lebanon and to the Arab Anti-Corruption and Integrity Network for bringing us all together. I would also like to express appreciation for the Moroccan Government's effective leadership of the Network over the past 2 years, while extending an offer of support to Lebanon as it prepares to assume this important role for the coming 2 years.

Thank you.

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