

Report on Corruption in the Arab Region

Corruption in Jordan

Sunday, March 16, 2008

Jordan - Amman

As part of its activities to gather information for the Report on Corruption in the Arab World, the Arab Region Parliamentarians Against Corruption (ARPAC) and its Jordanian chapter, Jordanian Parliamentarians Against Corruption, in cooperation with the New Jordan Research Center (Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Center), have organized a roundtable in Amman, Jordan on Sunday March 16, 2008, to discuss the Report on Corruption in Jordan, prepared by Dr. Malik Al-Emayra on behalf of ARPAC and its national chapter in Jordan.

A number of parliamentarians, dignitaries, leaders, civil society activists, researchers and government officials participated in the roundtable, which was divided in two sessions. The first session was chaired by Dr. Mohyideen Touq. Dr. Mamdouh Al- Abadi, Deputy Speaker of the Jordanian Parliament and President of the Jordanian chapter of ARPAC, addressed the participants and pointed out that the challenges facing parliamentarians in their endeavor to fight corruption and oversee governmental activities are enormous. These challenges are at the heart of the issue of development in the Arab countries and should be addressed head-on. He added that Jordan was the first country in the region to pass legislation and regulations that support comprehensive reforms in Jordan.

Chief Commissioner Dr. Abd Shkhanbeh, head of the Anti-Corruption Commission, said that corruption is not confined to particular countries but it has become an alarming issue that disrupts development in many countries. He pointed out that fighting corruption should be a key development priority and that the international community, including Jordan, pushed the issue of anti-corruption to the front by creating several international and regional anti-corruption agreements, in particular the UN Convention Against Corruption. Jordan was among the first countries to join the Convention.

In his address, Dr. Naser Al Sane, Member of Kuwait's Parliament and ARPAC's Chair, said that ARPAC was conducting a study to determine how widespread corruption is in the Arab world. It is the first anti-corruption study to be conducted by ARPAC. He stressed that the spread of corruption in the world and in the Arab region in particular causes a spike in unemployment, poverty and illiteracy and a drop in government spending on education, health, housing and culture in our countries.

Hani Hourani, Director General of the New Jordan Research Center (Al Urdun Al Jadid Research Center), called for the creation of an effective partnership between civil society organizations, governmental departments and agencies and parliament for performance auditing.

The second session of the roundtable focused on the presentation and discussion of the report. Dr. Malik Al-Emayra gave a brief summary of the report, which dealt with issues such as, anti-corruption agencies, the media and the press and civil society. The report indicated that members of upper management are most likely to be involved in corruption, followed by middle management and support staff. Fifty three percent believe that the state and its agencies are serious about fighting corruption.

The report concluded that the national integrity system should include legal measures that ensure accountability in a mechanical fashion and should not be subject to political discretionary powers, as well as developing national anti-corruption strategies.

The participants discussed the report and made a number of recommendations to be annexed to the report. At the end of the meeting, Dr. Al-Emayra promised to re-write the report in light of the participants' remarks and recommendations.