

## National Seminar on Egypt National Single Window

**Cairo, January 22, 2019** –Senior directors of the Egypt Customs Authorities (ECA) and relevant agencies in charge of the implementation of Egypt National Single Window (Egypt NSW) gathered in Cairo for a two-day National Seminar organized with UNDP’s support and moderated by its technical experts.

Dr. Ehab Abu Aish, Egypt Deputy Minister of Finance for Public Treasury, Mr. Al Sayed Kamal Negm, Commissioner of ECA and Mr. Yakup Beris, Regional Coordinator at

UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS), opened the seminar. Egypt expressed determination in putting the Single Window digital platform to the service of the public, including businesses and industries. A number of activities has already taken place in this regard and a new website for the platform will be activated in the coming days.

In this occasion, Dr. Ehab Abu Aish, launched the implementation of the technical assistance programme to ECA and concerned agencies which aims at modernizing control procedures to improve the delivery of services to the public, while at the same time boosting economic competitiveness, and facilitating e-business practices. To that end, Egypt will need to leverage information and communication technology (ICT) and digitalization to accelerate trade and ensure high level of compliance to national regulations.

Mr. Yakup Beris emphasized the enabling role of technology to support efforts towards good governance and inclusive growth. “National single windows offer an entry point to facilitate trade, and Egypt, thanks to its geographic location and human capital, has the potential to capitalize on it to generate more job opportunities and contribute to make the business environment friendlier to investors and manufacturers”, he said.

The seminar saw the participation of 75 senior directors and managers of ECA, in addition to experts from the Department of Customs of Jordan and line ministries who brought their experience and good practices to inform the discussion around the draft Roadmap of Egypt NSW. Participants also brainstormed the requirements to facilitate trade and investment through efficient control and the optimization of trade costs.

The seminar resulted in a series of recommendations that were endorsed by the Commissioner of ECA and that will serve as guideline for the implementation of Egypt NSW.

Participants expressed their appreciation for the support provided during the consultations by UNDP, the Swedish International Development Agency and by experts from the Jordan Customs.



## Digitalizing Trade Facilitation in the Arab Region

Around 180 representatives from 8 Arab countries attended a two-day Regional Conference on Digitalization for Trade Facilitation, organized in Amman by UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States in close collaboration with UNCTAD, World Customs Organization and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), under the patronage of HE Prime Minister Dr. Omar Razzaz.



The conference served as an interactive forum for sector's experts and practitioners to exchange knowledge, experiences, best practices and lessons learnt, as well as discuss challenges and opportunities of deepening connectivity and cross border exchanges through accelerated digitalization among Arab countries. Internet and digitalization opens new frontiers in facilitating on-line transactions, reducing the costs of participation to the markets and more importantly, channeling information in a seamless and timely manner. As such, it contributes to address major challenges of Arab economies in diversifying economic transactions and sectors, and at the same time, generating jobs.

HE. Dr. Tarek Al-Hamouri, the Jordanian Minister of Trade opened the conference on behalf of the Prime Minister, stressing how trade and economic integration within the Arab Region have the potential to boost inclusive growth and sustainable development. "To improve competitiveness and achieve these results, good governance should capitalize on new productive factors, such as enhanced use of ICT and the increasing importance of the private sector to strengthen Arab economic integration", he said. "Digitalization will help Jordan to move towards a new customs concept that is based on risk management and innovation. Surveillance procedures are necessary, and policies and regulations are being put in place for the development of these tools and procedures".

H.E. Erik Ullenhag, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Jordan reiterated the importance of investing in trade and the digitalization of its procedures to bolster economic growth and prosperity, enhance transparency and most importantly promote peace and stability in the region. He also highlighted the necessity of strengthening regional cooperation and partnership with neighboring countries while leveraging on the comparative advantages of different Arab economies and the potential of women in the labor market.

The Conference discussed twenty-three topics, facilitated by domain experts from UNDP, UNCTAD, World Customs Organization, Agadir Technical Unit, besides officials of the Government of Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar, as well as from the private sector such as Unilever, SEEBURGER, IBM, Maersk, and Aqaba Container Terminal. The role of the private sector in pursuing transformational changes has been stressed by several panelists over the two days. In particular, the Senior Technical Officer of the WCO mentioned bringing new actors in the supply chain (including SMEs, public and private sector) among the key priorities of the Arab region.

Participants discussed opportunities for higher trade efficiency and effectiveness in the Arab region, reflecting on the potential of digitalization for improved competitiveness, inclusive growth and innovation.

Ms. Sara Ferrer Olivella, UNDP Resident Representative to Jordan said: "In a region where

economic integration has been slow and disrupted by conflict and crises, we need to invest in trade to ensure that it becomes a powerful engine of inclusive growth towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals”.

Dr. Abdelmajid. Al-Rahamneh, Director General of the Department of Jordan Customs thanked UNDP for the progress made towards trade facilitation through its regional project on Strengthening Arab Economic Integration for Sustainable Development. The project promotes policy reforms and modernization of custom procedures, especially through the support to the National Single Window system, that leverages innovative data exchange methodologies and other technologies to make procedures more efficient and transparent, thereby increasing and speeding up trade flows. He also added: “There is an urgent need to control movement of products and goods transiting through Jordan and improve procedures to be up to international standards. One of the challenges Jordan is facing nowadays is being competitive to push investments into the country while at the same time keeping the surveillance standards of Jordanian customs high”.

The Conference resulted in the development of 11 recommendations aimed at promoting digitalization for better livelihood, women empowerment, trade and transport facilitation towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

At the end of the Conference, all the participants expressed their high appreciation for the support provided by the Government of Sweden, UNDP and UN sister agencies for facilitating such a useful learning and exchange experience, that enhanced their capacities and knowledge to design and implement customized solutions to enhance Arab interconnectivity, contributing to the economic growth of their region and the welfare of Arab citizens.