



Project Board Meeting

Strengthening of the Democratic Process in Egypt

27 February 2014 – 10:00 am-12:00 pm

A. Agenda

I. Welcoming remarks

- Mrs. Anita Nirody, Resident Representative, UNDP
- Counselor Nabil Salib, Chairman of the High Elections Committee
- Counselor Hamdan Hassan Fahmi, Secretary General of the Presidential Elections Committee
- H.E. Ambassador Omar Abou Eich, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for International Cooperation for Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

II. Presentations

- Project achievements to date by Mr. Carlos Valenzuela, Chief Electoral Advisor
- Short presentation on the Citizenship Initiative by Dr. Nihad Gohar, Programme Manager in UNWomen
- Annual Work Plan for 2014
- Project Extension in 2015

III. Comments by Project National Partners

- General Refaat Komsan, Prime Minister's Advisor on Security and Elections
- H.E. Ambassador Salah Sadek, Chairman, State Information Service
- General Sayed Maher, Head of Elections Department, Ministry of Interior
- Engineer Tarek Saad , Assistant Minister of State for Administrative Development

IV. Comments by Development Partners

V. Open discussion/recommendations

VI. Concluding remarks

B. Participants:

List of participants attached as Annex I.

C. Purpose of the meeting

The project board meeting, as a requirement by UNDP rules for monitoring and quality assurance, had the following objectives: to review the progress of the project, to endorse project work plan for 2014, and to request approval of the project to 2015.

- Ambassador Omar Abou Eich, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for International Cooperation for Development, recognized the Electoral assistance project as one of the most important projects conducted after the revolution. It was the first project that he has signed on behalf of MOFA with UNDP in November 2011 after months of negotiations. The project had a developmental approach within the political context of the elections. He mentioned that it is a multi-dimensional project that represents a real partnership with MOFA. He added that this project is not limited to UNDP; it includes collaboration with other UN agencies such as UN Women. Furthermore, he stated that the project has an impact in areas other than elections such as information technology, and women's empowerment as illustrated by the Citizenship Initiative and South-South Cooperation. Ambassador Abou Eish mentioned that the project provides logistical support to the HEC and PEC to facilitate their role in conducting the elections. The project went beyond the Egyptian borders and shared best practices and comparative experiences of other countries. Ambassador Abou Eish thanked UNDP for providing exposure opportunities to international comparative experiences. He is looking forward to extending the project into 2015.

E. Project presentation

- The meeting continued with a presentation on the progress achieved by the project, the annual work plan for 2014 and the plan for extension of the project for the year 2015, given by Carlos Valenzuela, Chief Technical Advisor and a presentation by Ms. Nihad Gohar, Programme Manager in UNWomen on the citizenship initiative (Annex II).
- Mr. Daniel Stroux, Project Coordinator, shared the project's financial situation including the total donors contributions (\$M 17.5 + \$M 3 pipeline), the remaining balance for 2014/2015 (\$ M 6.3) and the estimated funding gap is \$M 2 - 3.
- The presentations were followed by a series of questions and comments from the national and international development partners.

F. Comments and feedback

Below is a summary of comments provided during the meeting:

- General Refaat Komsan, Prime Minister's Advisor on Security and Elections- thanked UNDP for their support and stressed upon the need for continuous UNDP technical support particularly towards the establishment and structuring of an Election Management Body (EMB). General Komsan mentioned that the government was not open at the beginning to accept support from international organizations but now it's open to this kind of support. No major improvements in the electoral process in Egypt since 1956 till 2011. Since 2011 new improvements took place such as: 1) Security seals; 2) Manuals; 3) Voter database; 4) New legislations.

He stressed upon the need for changing the collaboration strategy in the upcoming period. He elaborated that in the last period most of the logistical needs were met through the procurement of durable electoral materials. In the next phase, there is a need for continuous UNDP technical support in terms of capacity building, providing trainings in areas related to elections and exposure to international experiences aiming towards the establishment and structuring of the future electoral management body (EMB). He urged the concerned authorities to provide support to the

of the democratic system, and the citizen's acceptance of results is key in a democratic process. Therefore, Switzerland would like to invest in long-term capacity building and welcomes UNDP to tackle issues with long-term prospective. Accordingly, he encouraged the Electoral Authorities in Egypt to draw from the UNDP experience and to make use of the comparative approach taking into consideration the challenges that face Egypt. He added that they are conscious of the political climate, the transitional phase and the current challenges that might face the electoral administration in Egypt. In this context, beyond technical improvements of the electoral process, aspects of inclusion and democratic values should continuously be integral part of the process. The inclusion of a permanent EMB in the latest constitution was a positive sign. The forthcoming elections will be again an occasion to test the opportunities, to identify the possibilities for improvement and to make further steps towards the establishment of this body. The tenets of a professional election management body are impartiality and independence, and the signs for this are on the road.

- The representative from the Embassy of the Netherlands inquired if UNDP cooperates with political parties and if they are entitled to do elections observation.
- Responding to a question raised by the representative of Netherland's Embassy regarding the observation of political parties and candidates agents for the election process, Mr. Carlos Valenzuela, clarified that although electoral observation and particularly the monitoring by the political parties and candidate agents is important, it doesn't constitute a part of the project activities. He explained that it was not a part of the work agreed upon with the authorities in Egypt and he stressed again that the focus of the project is long-term capacity building.

H. Open discussions/recommendations:

- General Refaat Qomsan emphasized the need to consider the establishment of the EMB as a midterm and not a long-term goal. He expressed the hope that the two forthcoming elections - presidential and parliamentary- will be the last ones held by committees, and that future elections in 2018 will be held under the umbrella of the new EMB. Mr. Valenzuela commented that he is looking forward with enthusiasm and patience to this turning point of establishing the EMB and that the activities of the project including the capacity building activities will continue through international perspective with flexibility regarding responding to specific requests but always with maintaining the long term objective.

I. Concluding remarks

Mrs. Anita Nirody stressed that this project is a partnership-based program. She thanked all the participants for their contributions and emphasized the importance of demonstrating activities in both short term and long term as the international partners are looking for concrete clear results and impact on the ground, and at the same time focused on building capacity and improving standards and practices of the electoral administration. She recommended the approval on the extension of the project until the end of 2015 and the approval of the annual work plan for 2014. The Board adopted the recommendation for an extension.

Annex I: List of Participants

| Name | Title & Organization |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| National Partners | |
| Counselor Nabil Salib | Chairman of the High Elections Committee |
| Judge Hesham Mokhtar | Spokesman of the HEC |
| Counselor Hamdan Fahmi | Secretary General of the Presidential Elections Committee |
| Ambassador Omar Abou Aich | Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for International Cooperation for Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| General Refat Qomsan | Prime Minister's Adviser on Security and Elections |
| Ambassador Salah El-Din Abd Al-Sadek | Chairman of the State Information Service |
| Ayman Walash | Expert in Political Affairs, State Information Service |
| General Sayed Maher | Head of the Elections Department, Ministry of Interior (MOI) |
| Tarek Nassar | Ministry of Interior |
| Engineer Tarek Saad | Director of the National Database Programme Director and Assistant Minister, MSAD |
| Mohamed Mansour | Project Manager, MSAD |
| Development Partners | |
| Akie Hoshino | First Secretary, Embassy of Japan |
| Yuichi Oba | Economic Counselor, Embassy of Japan |
| Racha El Assy | Program Manager, Embassy of Australia |
| Taro Azuna | Senior Rep, JICA |
| Ayman El-Sherbiny | Public Diplomacy and Political Assistant, Embassy of Netherlands |
| Florin Nicola | DCM, Embassy of Romania |
| Rene Amry | DCM, Embassy of Austria |
| Romain Darbellay | Director of Cooperation, Embassy of Switzerland |
| Berger Megahed Corina | Human Security Advisor, Embassy of Switzerland |
| Maria Hunskaar | Trainee, Embassy of Norway |