

**Conference on Judicial Administration Modernization in the Arab States  
Marrakech March 15-17, 2002**

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**Conference Summary Report**

The first Arab states regional conference on “Modernization of the Administration of Justice” was held in Marrakech, from March 15-17, 2002. The conference was convened by the Ministry of Justice in Morocco, the UNDP’s Program on Governance in the Arab Region (“POGAR”), and the World Bank’s Legal Vice Presidency. The International Development Law Institute (IDLI) also provided support in the organization and planning of this event. The conference was inaugurated by statements made by Dr. Oman Azziman, the Minister of Justice, Kingdom of Morocco, Dr. Rima Khalaf Hunaidi, Assistant Secretary General and UNDP Director for the Regional Bureau for the Arab States, and Mr. Ko-Yung Tung, Vice President and General Counsel of the World Bank.

The conference aimed to provide a forum for policy-makers and judicial authorities to learn about ongoing judicial reform projects; hear lessons from experience; articulate their development needs and priorities in the judicial sector; and establish a foundation for future regional collaborations in the field of judicial reform. In addition, the conference was intended to initiate a series of programs to be sponsored throughout this and the coming years on such topics as pilot court projects, judicial training and education, and institutional capacity-building activities.

We are pleased to report that the event was attended by representatives from 19 Arab states (Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen) the largest ever such event to deal specifically with judicial reform and related issues. A group of 30 international experts and observers also attended the conference. The total number of those who attended the conference was 130 participants. Plenary sessions focused on Arab countries’ experiences in the field of judicial administration reform; comparative international experience with judicial reform. On the second day, working group sessions focused on judicial training, administration of justice, and automation.

We are also pleased to report that the conference catalyzed interest among participants to embark on new projects in the area of judicial administration modernization and reform. Based on positive feedback from a number of participants, new activities are currently being planned.

A full report of the conference proceedings will be issued by the Ministry of Justice in Morocco and UNDP/POGAR in May 2002.

Recommendations from the working groups are as follows:

## **I. Training**

1. Promote research in judicial training institutes
2. Diversify judicial training course offerings
3. Include judicial ethics in course offerings
4. Cooperate regionally on judicial training
5. Establish clear educational criteria for selection of judges
6. Improve continuing legal education for judges and clerks
7. Include information technology in curricula
8. Improve training for trainers *as such* to create a professional cadre of trainers
9. Improve the skills of judges' assistants and enable them to provide more support in the process of modernizing the judiciary

## **II. Modernization of Case Management**

1. Increase the number of judges to deal with severe case backlog
2. Improve access to legal and judicial information
3. Promote the specialization of judges to improve access to justice
4. Promote the gradual introduction of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) consistent with country needs
5. Build awareness among citizens of alternative methods of dispute resolution
6. Simplify procedures and shorten case processing times
7. Empower the judiciary by increasing human and financial resources
8. Promote better access to information
9. Improve skills of judicial assistants

## **III. Information Technology**

1. Information technology should not be perceived as an end in itself, but rather as a means to improving the productivity of human resources
2. Establish a regional database for legal/judicial information to facilitate exchange between countries
3. Adopt legislation, if necessary, to enable use of information technology in the legal system
4. Create a regional network in legal information technology