The Arab Human Development Team: A Report prepared for Arabs by Arabs

The AHDR 2002 challenged the Arab world to overcome three cardinal obstacles to human development posed by widening gaps in freedom, women's empowerment and knowledge across the region.

Looking at international, regional and local developments affecting Arab countries since the report was issued confirms that those challenges remain critically pertinent and may have become even graver, especially in the area of freedom.

Nowhere is this more apparent than the status of Arab knowledge at the beginning of the 21st century, the theme of this second report. Despite the presence of significant human capital in the region, AHDR 2003 concludes that disabling constraints hamper the acquisition, diffusion and production of knowledge in Arab societies. This human capital, under more promising conditions, could offer a substantial base for an Arab knowledge renaissance.

The Report affirms that knowledge can help the region to expand the scope of human freedoms, enhance the capacity to guarantee those freedoms through good governance and achieve the higher moral human goals of justice and human dignity. It also underlines the importance of knowledge to Arab countries as a powerful driver of economic growth through higher productivity.

Its closing section puts forward a strategic vision for creating knowledge societies in the Arab world based on five pillars:

- Guaranteeing key freedoms;
- Disseminating quality education;
- Embedding science;
- Shifting towards knowledge based production; and
- Developing an enlightened Arab knowledge model.

The AHDR 2003 makes it clear that, in the Arab civilization, the pursuit of knowledge is prompted by religion, culture, history and the human will to achieve success. Obstructions to this quest are the defective structures created by human beings—social, economic and above all political. Arabs must remove or reform these structures in order to take the place they deserve in the world of knowledge at the beginning of the knowledge millennium.

AHDR 2003 is published by UNDP and prepared by a team of Arab scholars:

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Khalaf Hunaidi, Dr. Rima Dr. Khalaf Hunaidi became Assistant Secretary-General and Director, Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS), at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in September 2000. Under her leadership, the Regional Bureau issued the first Arab Human Development Report in July 2002, and she conti- nues her work analyzing many of the regional developmental issues. Dr. Khalaf Hunaidi has also pioneered important regional initiatives on Arab education issues, knowledge acquisition and economic growth. Before joining the UNDP, she was Deputy Prime Minister of Jordan where as head of the ministerial economic team, she promot- ed the drive for economic reform in Jordan while simultaneously working on a package for building human capabilities, alleviating human poverty and strengthening the social safety net. She also served as Minister of Planning and Minister of Industry and Trade; she was also a Senator in the Upper House of the Jordanian Parliament. Dr. Khalaf Hunaidi has a degree in Economics from the American University of Beirut, and has an MA in Economics and a PhD in Systems Science from Portland State University.

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