



# Visions for Recovery: Delivering for the most vulnerable

## MENA-OECD Governance FORUM

31 March 2021



The webinar was held as part of the MENA-OECD Governance Forum, a series of important events organised virtually on 30-31 March 2021 to inform the MENA-OECD Ministerial Conference "Designing a Roadmap to Recovery in MENA", organised by the MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Competitiveness for Development on 1 April 2021.

The Forum gathered close to **500 delegates from 41 countries**, with the notable participation of 14 Ministers and Ambassadors from MENA and OECD, as well as high-level government officials, representatives from civil society, independent institutions and businesses associations. It addressed critical aspects of good governance promotion in the MENA region to respond to the impact of COVID-19 and ensure a more inclusive and resilient post-COVID-19 recovery.

Following the Ministerial Conference, MENA and OECD Ministers adopted a Ministerial Declaration on Governance and Competitiveness, setting guiding principles and mutual commitments for collaboration between MENA and OECD governments in the years to come as part of the Initiative's fifth mandate 2021-2025.

### CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

Governments across the region have taken unprecedented steps to expand bailout plans as well as welfare programmes and social safety nets in an effort to support households and businesses throughout the pandemic. Even so, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups continue to be severely impacted by the crisis.

The MENA region has the world's youngest population, is home to the largest community of refugees in the world and is affected by conflict and instability. The impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups in the region has thus been particularly devastating. Estimates indicate that the economic slowdown caused by the pandemic will cause an additional 8.3 million

people from the region to fall into poverty and 700,000 women to lose their jobs<sup>1</sup>. The recovery from the crisis will thus require to adopt a more inclusive approach in order to make sure that no one is left behind.

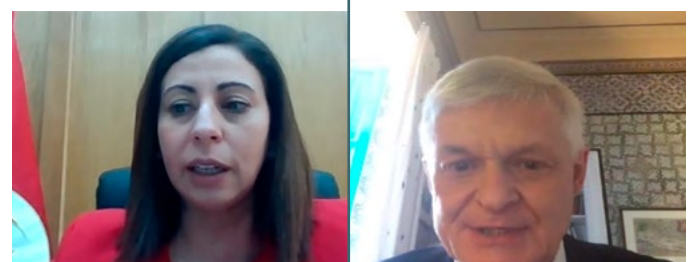
Adopting a people-centric approach is essential to ensure that government responses are responsive to the needs and demands of those most impacted by the current crisis and that plans for the post-COVID-19 recovery deliver fair and inclusive policy outcomes for all. The participation of vulnerable groups in public life, in all their complexity and diversity, could also bring further attention to the demands of the most vulnerable.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

The event was opened by **H.E. Ms. Hasna BEN SLIMANE**, Minister to the Tunisian Head of Government in charge of Civil Service and Co-Chair of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme, **H.E. Mr. Edward OAKDEN**, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Tunisia, and **Ms. Elsa PILICHOWSKI**, Director of Public Governance, OECD.

The webinar was moderated by Dr. Rita Stephan, Regional Coordinator, Religious and Ethnic Minorities, USAID.

This high-level event was an opportunity for government representatives, youth and civil society actors to share their different visions and exchange best practices on what governments can do to deliver better policies for better lives as well as a better recovery for the most vulnerable across MENA and the world.



H.E. Minister Hasna Ben Slimane

H.E. Ambassador Edward Oakden

<sup>1</sup> OECD Policy Response Paper (2020), COVID-19 crisis response in MENA



# GOVERNANCE FORUM

Visions for recovery  
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## Roundtable and Open Discussion



**Ms. Miriam ALLAM**  
Head of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme, OECD



**Ms. Fabiana DADONE**  
Minister of Youth, Italy



**Dr. Sahar EL SONBATY**  
Secretary General of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, Egypt



**Mr. Chris HODGES**  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Assistance Coordination and Press and Public Diplomacy, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, United States Department of State



**Dr. Salma NIMS**  
Secretary General of the National Commission for Women, Jordan



**H.E. Ambassador Paul GARNIER**  
Ambassador of Switzerland to Egypt



**Mr. Tarek NESH-NASH**  
Founder of Impact for Development, GovRight and ICT4Dev R&D, Morocco



**Mr. Labid ZAAFRANE**  
CEO of the Financing Bank of Small and Medium Enterprises (BFPME), Tunisia



**Ms. Lynn CHEIKH MOUSSA**  
young journalist, Lebanon

### Participants highlighted that

- ▶ The COVID-19 pandemic represents an opportunity for governments to ensure responsive and inclusive policy outcomes for all to leave no one behind.
- ▶ Governments should place youth and gender considerations at the centre of their recovery efforts to ensure that public action is sensitive to their needs.
- ▶ Creating more open, transparent and accountable governments helps rebuild citizens' trust in their public institutions, which will be critical in shaping an inclusive and equitable response and recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ▶ Governments should better engage with vulnerable groups, including youth and women, if the benefits of recovery are to be sustainable for all segments of the society.
- ▶ Civil society organisations are key actors in providing direct support to those most affected by the pandemic and partnerships with governments will be essential to better meet the needs of the most vulnerable.
- ▶ The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of regional policy dialogue. International cooperation and regional dialogue are more crucial than ever to help share lessons learned and exchange good practices.

### WAY FORWARD

- ▶ The discussions will provide strategic guidance to the MENA-OECD Governance Programme and will inform the implementation of its Programme of Work as part of its new mandate for 2021-2025.
- ▶ MENA and OECD delegates renewed their commitment to engage in a regional dialogue on vulnerable groups, including youth empowerment and gender equality, to inform their efforts in the post-COVID-19 recovery and beyond.



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