

## **Yemen Consultative Group meeting**

**London, 16 November 2006**

**Statement by the Presidency of the European Union**

**(Finland's EU Presidency)**

The European Union warmly welcomes the initiative taken by the Government of Yemen, the World Bank, the GCC and the UK for this Consultative Group meeting. Our sincere thanks go to all of them as Co-Chairs, sponsors and hosts of this important gathering. We greatly appreciate the chance to join with the wide range of partners present today, and we hope and trust that the discussions we have shared will lead to enhanced cooperation between our different groups of donors - big and small, from North and South.

We welcome in particular the renewed commitment of the Gulf Cooperation Council towards Yemen, which we have been witnessing over the past months and throughout this meeting. This commitment is proof of the GCC's interest in stability and security in the entire Gulf region - an interest fully shared by the EU. The EU, for its part, stands ready to share its experience of enlargement processes with the GCC and Yemen, as they seek closer cooperation and integration.

The EU is strongly supportive of the democratic reform process underway in Yemen. Most recently, this was evidenced in the deployment of an extensive EU elections observation mission to the Presidential and local elections of 20 September.

We warmly welcome the positive elements of the electoral process, including the openly contested nature of the elections, the active election campaign, and the peaceful voting process. At the same time, we underline our serious concern regarding the lack of transparency in the post-election process, as reported by the observation mission. The EU looks forward to a speedy publication of the final results of the elections, and trusts that the shortcomings identified will be duly addressed in view of next Parliamentary elections due in 2009.

Yemen's commitment to and efforts for reform are commendable. Last year, an ambitious reform agenda was adopted - now is the time to put it into practice. Determined policy decisions are needed to move from planning to implementation, and from words to actions. In many fields, this work is already well underway. In others, more efforts are needed.

It is important to recognise that all parts of the reform agenda are closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Political and economic reforms, combating corruption, and ensuring rule of law, all go hand in hand. Together they form the basis for an enabling environment for investment and private sector development, and contribute to creating concrete perspectives for sustained economic development.

Against this background, the EU encourages further efforts especially in anti-corruption and transparency, judicial reform, and human rights. As we've heard, some of the key challenges facing Yemen include poverty, population growth, education, health, and water. These challenges are connected by two crucially important concepts: Good governance and gender equality. The participation of women in particular is vital for the development of every aspect of Yemeni society: Improving the position of women is the single most powerful tool for combating the problems facing Yemen today. Improving the status of women will not only lead to better lives for women and girls, but will have far-ranging positive repercussions throughout Yemeni society — also for men and boys.

The EU and Yemen are long-term partners. Our bilateral relations date back to 1978 and our current Co-operation Agreement provides the basis for extensive cooperation in the economic, trade, environmental, cultural and social sectors. Our mutual relations were further strengthened through the launch of a regular political dialogue three years ago. The frank and open nature of this dialogue is proof of the closeness of our relationship. At the moment, we are looking forward to the next round of dialogue which will take place in Sana'a in a few days' time.

At this critical juncture, the EU is ready to assist Yemen's continued reform process with additional resources: Overall EU assistance, combining Member States' commitments and the Commission's assistance programme, will amount to 516 million euros - equal to 660 million USD - over the coming four year period (2007 to 2010). Details of this assistance will be

given by the Member States and the European Commission in their statements.

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