**Meeting Minutes**

 **3RF Working Group on Anticorruption, PFM, Public Procurement and Civil Service Reform**

**January 11, 2024**

Opening Remarks

1. **Jean-Christophe Carret, Country Director, World Bank** – Mr. Carret described the evolution of the 3RF process and the central role that the 3RF working groups would now take as inclusive platforms for policy dialogue among various stakeholders to address Lebanon's national reform challenges. Mr. Carret emphasized that the working groups should focus on technical-level dialogue that will be crucial to help international organizations and the donor community coordinate and prioritize financial and technical assistance with the plans and needs.
2. **Ambassador Sandra De Waele, Head of Delegation, Delegation of the European Union to Lebanon** – Amb. De Waele noted that our collective presence highlights the importance of our joint commitment and effort to combating corruption and fostering transparent governance and accountability. Transparency in public spending, effective public financial management, and renovating the civil service are key steps towards rebuilding an efficient and reliable public administration for Lebanese citizens. The Ambassador noted that only through collective work can we move forward towards a Lebanon where accountability, transparency and efficiency in the public administration are a reality. The Ambassador stressed that this Working Group is an excellent platform to make this happen. She reiterated the EU’s strong commitment to providing support in the reform process, both through financial assistance and in terms of policy dialogue and coordination.
3. **Mr. Imran Riza, Deputy Special Coordinator for Lebanon, United Nations** – Mr. Riza provided a strategic summary of UNDP’s efforts, through the financial contribution of the EU and DANIDA, towards the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2020-2025). The work focused mainly on supporting: (1) OMSAR’s Minister in her capacity as president of the Technical Anti-Corruption Committee to oversee and monitor the NACS; (2) the National Anti-Corruption Commission to carry out its mandate through the provision of technical and operational support; and (3) the integration of UNDP’s Sectoral Corruption Risk Management methodology at the Lebanese University, as well as the initiation of its integration in other key sectors.

Presentations from Government Institutions

1. **H.E Najla Riachi, Minister of State for Administrative Reform, Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform, OMSAR** – The Minister announced that OMSAR would be restructured this year. She noted that the Ministry has led the Government’s efforts to coordinate and support the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy as well as the Digital Transformation Strategy**.** The Minister thanked the World Bank for its assistance with developing an implementation roadmap for the Digital Strategy and stated that key implementation decrees, including one on e-signatures were under preparation for submission to the Council of Ministers this month. For the future, the Minister noted that a public administration reform and assistance plan was needed along with a greater focus on good governance. She closed her remarks by requesting “more and greater” coordination for all assistance to avoid fragmentation and for a more inclusive approach to create greater local ownership of reforms.
2. **Dr. Joe Maalouf, Member of the National Anti-Corruption Commission NACC –** See attached statement.

Presentations from Working Group Co-Leads

1. **European Union** (*Alessia Squarcella, Deputy Head of Cooperation; Mr. Fabien Moncade, Expertise France*) – Ms. Squarcella commended OMSAR for its efforts in drafting and getting the approval of the Digital Transformation Strategy, as well as overseeing and coordinating the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy even with the current staffing challenges at OMSAR. She noted that additional support should be extended to OMSAR to enhance its ability to fulfil its mandate more efficiently and effectively. Ms. Squarcella expressed her pleasure to that the National Anti-Corruption Commission has successfully formulated its strategic plan, implemented some of its mandate such as the whistle-protection law, and received asset declarations from public officials despite the challenges that it has faced, including resource constraints and pending bylaw approvals. She noted, however, that for the NACC to be fully operational, it is crucial for its bylaws to be approved, and that it continues to receive ongoing support from the government and international donors. She noted that the EU will continue providing financial aid and technical assistance to promote governance and strengthen institutions in Lebanon and announced that the EU just signed a contract with Expertise France for a project that will tackle three key aspects of public administration reform with the final objective of fighting corruption and improving governance. The EF representative gave a presentation on the new project that will tackle three key aspects of public administration reform: i) public human resources management; ii) public procurement; and iii) accountability of the administration, through support to public oversight bodies including the National Anti-Corruption Commission. EF representative emphasised in the need of coordinating between all relevant stakeholders.
2. **UNDP** (*Mr. Mohammed Salih, Resident Representative*) – Mr. Salih noted that UNDP has been actively supporting OMSAR with the launch and implementation of both the Digital Transformation and National Anti-Corruption Strategies as well as providing extensive support for the NACC (website, asset recovery and asset declaration systems). For 2024, UNDP will scale up its support to OMSAR, prepare a document on broader public administration reform, work on local governance and take on sectoral work starting with a corruption risk management project with Lebanon University.
3. **The World Bank** (*Ms. Jiwanka Wickramasinghe, Senior Financial Management Specialist; Ms. Lina Fares, Senior Procurement Specialist; Mr. David Bernstein, Lead Public Sector Specialist*) – See attached presentation for information on the World Bank’s proposed Fiscal Management Project with the Ministry of Finance and past and planned capacity building assistance to implement the Public Procurement Law. In addition to this work, the World Bank representatives provided updates on the Bank’s Lebanon Financing Facility-supported work with the Institute of Finance on Public Investment Management (assessment stage completed and presented to stakeholders in December 2023, implementation stage to begin shortly with additional World Bank funding); with the Court of Accounts (ongoing assistance with forensic audits and audits under the Public Procurement Law); and planned assistance to the NACC for asset declarations in collaboration with UNDP.

Discussion

1. **Representative from AFD** – Requested that WG members prepare a document that briefly describes activities ongoing and planned by all donors to improve coordination which was a key topic across all interventions during this meeting. Asked whether there are plans to continue to assist the Ministry of Finance with data entry efforts that are critical for developing the budget. *(The World Bank representative noted that these efforts would be supported by the planned Financial Management loan.)*
2. **Institute of Finance** (Ms. Lamia Moubayed, President) – The IOF President recognized and thanked the donors for their past support for and work with the Institute on reforms for the full range of topics under this WG. She noted that the Institute would be starting an international master’s program in public procurement with the University of Rome Tor Vergata.
3. **Civil Service Board** (Ms. Nisrine Machmouchi, President) – The President noted that CSB was looking forward to working with the EU and EF to improve the IT tools at the Board and offered to present the Board’s reform plans at a future WG meeting.
4. **General Points**
	1. The 3RF should be simplified and become the nexus between humanitarian work and development, giving space to reform. The track on development should be accelerated. It should become more inclusive and further engage CSOs and governmental counterparts.
	2. At the pillar level, the need to engage with the government to create ownership was stressed. Future strategizing for administrative reform should be based on existing opportunities under the Digital Transformation and National Anti-Corruption Strategies.
	3. It is critical that the WG meetings continue to focus on champions in the Lebanese public sector who are still doing their best and making progress being made despite obstacles. Stress was placed on the need for WG members to coordinate among ourselves on what could be done to support these champions and their reform progress.