

Good morning, your Excellency Ms Jameh, Dr. Dashti, Dr. Momtaz, colleagues at UNESCWA, Nathalie, colleagues, at UNCTAD, Teresa and colleagues representing the many different jurisdictions from the North Africa and Gulf regions and from outside these regions. It is an honour for me to speak to you today.

Knowledge and the presence of the OECD in the North Africa and Gulf regions owes much to the Letter of Understanding we signed with ESCWA and UNCTAD which allows for this Joint Forum.

Outside of this Joint Forum and activities we are undertaking with ESCWA and UNCTAD, the OECD has been working closely with the Tunisian government and the Conseil de la Concurrence. I believe we will hear from the Conseil tomorrow about their perspective on our co-operation.

In February 2021, last month, Tunisia and the OECD launched a new project to foster pro-competitive reforms in the country.

This project builds on the success of the 2019 Competition Assessment of two important sectors of the economy – wholesale & retail trade and freight transport – and leverages the excellent work relations we established with the Tunisian Competition Council under the leadership of President Ben Mahmoud and his team. I invite you to consult our website for more information on this project.

OECD competition assessments are based on the OECD Competition Assessment Toolkit. This toolkit is designed to identify shortcomings in the regulatory and policy environment. The Toolkit is organised around a list of questions that screen whether regulations can potentially restrict competition, for instance by creating barriers to entry or by discriminating between suppliers. When applicable, recommendations are made to remove, or adapt the regulation to allow for competition.

It is worth mentioning that this 2019 project in Tunisia made 220 specific recommendations and estimated the positive effect of their implementation for the Tunisian economy at 0.6% of GDP. And indeed, most of our competition assessment projects will result in such extensive recommendations.

The new project launched last month with Tunisia is more comprehensive and includes three main components: (i) a Peer Review of Tunisia's competition law and policy, (ii) a Competition Assessment of laws and regulations in two new sectors: tourism and banking, and (iii) a market study of the banking sector.

It will be conducted in close cooperation with the Competition Council, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Tourism and the Central Bank of Tunisia.

The work on the Peer Review component has already started and our objective is to present the report at the Global Forum on Competition end of this year. An OECD peer reviews are a core element of the OECD work. The mechanisms of peer reviews vary, but it is founded upon the willingness of a country to submit its laws and policies analysis and comparison to international best practice. The peer review process provides valuable insights into the country under study, getting to the heart of ways in which each country deals with competition and regulatory issues, from the soundness of its competition laws to the structure and effectiveness of its competition institutions. To date OECD Competition has undertaken peer review with a wide range of countries from around the world, not only OECD members but also countries in Asia such as Viet Nam, several across Latin America, as well as Eurasia including Ukraine and Kazakhstan. We not only have the Tunisia review under way but also one for the Philippines.

Let just also say a word on market studies. You might recall that I said that Tunisia will undergo a market study of its banking sector. Market studies assess whether competition in a market is working efficiently, and identify measures to address any issues that are identified. These measures can include recommendations such as proposals for regulatory reform or improving information dissemination amongst consumers. They can also include the opening of antitrust investigations. The market study of

Tunisia's banking sector will use the process outlined in the OECD's Market Studies Guide for Competition Authorities that can be found online. Market studies are a powerful tool for competition authorities to understand the state of competition in a sector.

Thank you for your attention. I would be happy to answer any questions. All of this information is available on our website.