Introductory Remarks at the

Inter-departmental meeting on Middle East initiatives

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Maureen O’Neil
President, International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Good afternoon, and welcome to you all. Bonjour et bienvenue à tous. I am delighted
that you could attend this special inter-departmental meeting today. It is a special
pleasure to introduce to you our honoured guest, Dr. Rima Khalaf Hunaidi.

Dr. Khalaf Hunaidi is well known to us as the driving force behind three landmark
reports on Arab human development. The first two dealt with challenges for the third
millennium and building a knowledge society. The most recent report, on governance,
will be the subject of our discussion today.

Dr. Khalaf Hunaidi has had a distinguished career and certainly one that is difficult to
summarize in just a few minutes. Rima Khalaf Hunaidi is the United Nations Assistant
Secretary General and the Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau of Arab States. Prior to
joining the UN in 2000, she held a number of senior government posts in her native
Jordan, including Minister of Industry and Trade, Minister of Planning, and Deputy
Prime Minister. During her tenure as head of Jordan's ministerial economic team, Dr.
Khalaf Hunaidi succeeded in pushing forward the drive for economic reform. At the same
time, she spearheaded efforts to alleviate poverty and strengthen the social safety net.

From 1997 until 2000, Dr. Khalaf Hunaidi served as a senator in the Upper House of the
Jordanian Parliament. During the same period, she also served as a member of the
Economic Consultative Council, a public-private sector initiative established and directly
supervised by King Abdullah to promote economic reform and modernization in Jordan.

Let me take a few moments to tell you about IDRC and our work in the Middle East.

Depuis plus de trente ans, le CRDI appuie la recherche sur l’environnement et la gestion
des ressources naturelles, sur la consolidation de la paix et le développement
démocratique, sur le commerce et la compétitivité économique, et sur la promotion de
l’égalité entre les sexes. Par ailleurs, depuis deux ans, le CDRI finance, de concert avec le
PNUD, l’initiative pilote Genre et citoyenneté dans le monde arabe. The goal of the
initiative is to stimulate policy dialogue on women’s empowerment and gender inequality
in the Arab world.
IDRC also plays an active role as a member of the Canadian foreign policy family, working in strong, creative partnerships with our colleagues at CIDA and Foreign Affairs Canada. For example, we have worked together to generate knowledge on the Palestinian refugee issue in the Middle East Peace Process and on water demand management in that region.

The UNDP’s most recent Arab Human Development Report is also very timely for IDRC’s work in the Middle East, especially as we embark, in partnership with our CIDA and Foreign Affairs colleagues, on a new project examining Good Governance in the Middle East region, with a particular focus on Iraq.

We are pleased that colleagues from both of these departments could join us here today. Let me take this opportunity to thank them for their ongoing support and collegiality.

As I said before, Dr. Khalaf Hunaidi was instrumental in seeing through three groundbreaking reports on Arab human development. We will discuss with her today the latest report titled: Arab Human Development Report: Towards Freedom in the Arab World. We look forward to her providing us with an overview of the key messages of the Report, so that we can better work towards strengthening good governance in the region.

And now, Dr. Khalaf Hunaidi, we are anxious to hear from you the key messages from “Towards Freedom in the Arab World”. I can think of no better grounding for our own contributions to strengthening good governance in the region. Ladies and Gentlemen, Dr. Rima Khalaf Hunaidi.