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**New Frontiers of Openness:
Advancing Budget Transparency and Accountability in the MENA Region**
14 October 2023

During the Annual Meetings in Marrakech, the International Monetary Fund ([IMF](#)) Middle East Regional Technical Assistance Center ([METAC](#)) organized the Roundtable “New Frontiers of Openness: Advancing Budget Transparency and Accountability in the MENA Region”. The high-level event demonstrated the benefits of greater budget transparency and highlighted reforms and opportunities for progress in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

The event brought together representatives from government and civil society from countries in the region, the IMF, the International Budget Partnership (IBP) and the European Union (EU) to showcase successful models of reform, address concerns over greater openness and stimulate debate on fiscal transparency from different angles. It commenced with a welcome from METAC Director **Holger Floerkemeier** and opening remarks by **Mathieu Bousquet**, Acting Director of the European Union’s DG NEAR A. Mr. Bousquet stressed the importance of fiscal transparency for government accountability and the efficient and equitable management of government resources. This necessitates public access to budget information, the availability of reliable information on budget preparation, analysis, and monitoring. Moreover, public participation in budget processes through a constructive dialogue between government institutions and the civil society will reinforce trust and confidence between citizens and their governments.

IBP Executive Director **Ana Patricia Muñoz** provided framing remarks and moderated the subsequent panel discussion. She launched the discussion by presenting findings from a new METAC Regional Note on [Strengthening Budget Transparency in the MENA Region](#), which was coauthored by experts from METAC, IBP and UNDP. Ms. Muñoz emphasized that two trends stand out for the MENA region: While the region performs below worldwide averages on fiscal transparency indicators, several countries in the region also struggle to move forward their fiscal transparency agenda, as evident by the backsliding on budget transparency indicators. Yet, the region exhibits significant diversity, and some countries have achieved progress in recent years.

In the discussion, speakers from the region showcased their efforts and examples of successful economic reform implementation, as well as the challenges that remain.

The Vice Minister of Finance in Egypt, **Ahmed Kouchouk**, stressed the need of relevant institutions and players to push reforms, build the right institutional set-up, and ensure a direct dialogue with key stakeholder. He illustrated success stories from Egypt, including the

development of its Central Audit Agency, as well as enhanced data collection and public accessibility.

The President of the Finance Chamber of the Court of Auditors in Morocco, **Yassin Naciri**, outlined elements that can contribute to greater transparency, among others the availability of fiscal information in quantity and quality, such that supervisory institutions can fulfill their role and exercise control.

The panel also shed light on the perspective of civil society. **Karim Trabelsi**, Economic Expert at the General Labour Union of Tunisia (UGTT), explained that active citizen participation directly contributed to improving budget transparency in Tunisia. He also pointed out that while the civil society has developed strategies to promote more equitable public budgets, substantial reform needs remain paramount.

The Deputy Director of the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department, **Katherine Baer** showed how the IMF helps countries to enhance their fiscal transparency practices. While the IMF's fiscal transparency evaluation tools have helped improving budget processes with greater transparency, budget institutions must be further strengthened, including through capacity development.

The roundtable event drew significant attention both from in-person and virtual audiences. It concluded with a Q&A session, during which attendees reinforced the panel discussion's call to further advance budget transparency and accountability in the MENA region.