

In the presence of H.E. Mr. Abdel Fattah El Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt

## AMF, GIZ and AFI launch Financial Inclusion in the Arab Region Initiative (FIARI)

Under the Auspices of the Council of Arab Central Banks and Monetary Agencies' Governors, and in the presence of President of Egypt, H.E. Mr. Abdel Fattah El Sisi, the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, and the Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI) launched the Financial Inclusion for the Arab Region Initiative (FIARI) on 14 September 2017, during the 2017 AFI Global Policy Forum held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

The aim of FIARI is to help accelerate conducive policies and actions for enhancing Arab societies' access to financial services through an effective coordination mechanism, by supporting the implementation of national financial inclusion policies. The regional initiative is using financial inclusion as a driving force for sustainable economic and social development, aligned with the range of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

On this occasion, "H.E Dr. Abdulrahman A. Al Hamidy, Director General Chairman of the Board of the Arab Monetary Fund, highlights the importance of this initiative in driving support for the development of policies, strategies and appropriate programmes aiming at enhancing financial inclusion in the Arab world. In this regard, His Excellency reiterates the commitment of the Arab Monetary Fund to intensify its efforts in providing technical assistance and capacity building to member countries towards achieving universal financial access. H.E highlighted that the regional momentum towards financial inclusion in the Arab region has been reinforced by establishing a regional Financial Inclusion Task Force (FITF) in 2012 and organizing an Arab Financial Inclusion Day to be held annually on April 27.

"As we show the will to join forces under FIARI and foster knowledge, we reinforce our commitment to financial inclusion and thus to addressing some of the region's most urgent challenges such as youth unemployment and women's economic exclusion," said Ms. Ute Klamert, GIZ's Head of Europe, Mediterranean and Central Asia, during the launch ceremony.

"The Arab Region welcomes AFI and AFI welcomes the Arab Region into the Network. FIARI will enable us to engage in the region, to learn from each other on important issues such as financial inclusion for forcibly displaced persons, women's financial inclusion but also SME finance. These are important issues and regulators can make a difference", AFI Executive Director Dr. Alfred Hannig told media during the week-long AFI Global Policy Forum.

Arab countries have recognized financial inclusion as a key policy objective that stimulates growth and employment, reduces poverty, promotes social well-being, and contributes to financial stability. Greater access to and use of formal financial services would empower almost 71% of adults (78% of women) and the 4 out of 5 businesses in the Arab world, helping to bring them into the formal economy, and boost sustainable development.

The Arab world has witnessed an increased momentum in policy dialogue and national initiatives to address financial inclusion challenges. The AMF has promoted the exchange of knowledge among its 22-member countries. Six financial policymaking institutions from the Arab Region are currently part of AFI network, with more expected to join during FIARI's implementation. GIZ has been cooperating with Arab partner governments on policies for inclusive financial systems, addressing digital finance, microfinance, SME finance, women and refugees.

The new initiative was launched in the presence of the Egyptian President, the Prime Minister, H.E. Sherif Ismail, the Governor of the Central Bank of Egypt, H.E. Mr. Tarek Amer, the Chairman of the Council of Arab Central Banks and Monetary Agencies' Governors, H.E. Abdellatif Jouahri, and numerous distinguished Ministers and Governors from the region and beyond.

In establishing FIARI, the founding members draw on their successful cooperation from the regional policy forums on "Financial Inclusion and Employment" and "Financial Inclusion of Women" that took place in Jordan in 2015 and 2016, respectively. They laid out the path for joining forces in the G7 Deauville Partnership's Action Plan for Financial Inclusion in the MENA Region in 2015 and reiterated under the German G20 presidency and the Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion this year. FIARI will provide an open platform for coordination among all development partners involved in advancing financial inclusion in the Arab region, such as the World Bank.