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سفارة
الجمهورية الجزائرية
الديمقراطية الشعبية
أوتاوا

CANADA-ARAB EDUCATION FORUM

Speech by His Excellency

Smail BENAMARA

*Ambassador of Algeria
Dean of the Group of Arab Ambassadors in
Canada*

Ottawa, Novembre 20th, 2011.

Mrs. Karen McBride,

President and C.E.O of the Canadian Bureau for International Education,

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues, Honourable Guests, Delegates and Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen;

On behalf of my colleagues of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Canada, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the organizers for this opportunity to speak at the opening session of this first edition of the Canada-Arab Education Forum.

I congratulate the Canadian Bureau for International Education and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade for this initiative, which gives a special place for Canada-Arab cooperation as part of the 45th CBIE Congress activities.

The goals and ambitions assigned to this Forum by the organizers are shared by the Arab countries working to build a socio-economic development based on well-trained and well qualified human resources.

Canada represents in this context a model for quality of training and research and therefore, it is an ideal partner to promote our cooperation in this field.

This is the reason why thousands of students from Arab countries have been trained and continue to be trained in Canada, thus benefiting from quality supervision, teaching and research laboratories. These students are one of the best vehicles of friendship, rapprochement and understanding between Canada and the Arab world.

The cooperation in the field of education has also grown through the creation of campus of Canadian colleges and universities in Arab countries, the signing of many agreements between universities and the exchange of professors.

However, it has been noticed that academic and university relations have tremendously developed, based on the occasional needs and not in an organized framework.

Therefore, we welcome this first edition of this Forum which, I hope, will allow having fruitful discussion about this cooperation but also to propose and make suggestions for the future.

Let me in this context to suggest the idea of the institutionalization of the Forum as a future and permanent mechanism for consultation and dialogue. Therefore, why not consider periodic meetings to be held alternately in Canada and in a country of Arab World?

The issues on the agenda of such Canada-Arab consultation mechanism would be many:

- First of all, I would see it as a way to define a common and concerted strategy and vision for cooperation in the field of education for the medium and long term.

- It will also deal with the problems impeding the harmonious development of this cooperation, such as:

- The issue of high tuition fees applied to foreign students and making Canada less competitive with European universities.

- There is the issue of drastic reduction in quota exemptions granted to certain Arab countries by the province of Quebec that allowed them to benefit from fees similar to those paid by Canadian citizens. In this context, we wish not only that Quebec would increase the quota, but also that this exemption policy could be extended to other provinces.

- There is also the recurring question of the slow process and difficulties in issuing students visas.

This consultation framework could finally play a major role in the elaboration of research projects between Canadian universities and research centers with their counterparts in Arab countries, involving particularly the intelligentsia available within Canadian from Arab Origins and Diasporas.

Research projects where Canada can bring its expertise and know-how to Arab countries could be concentrated in priority areas such as: agro-food, hydraulics, health, solar energy etc

What would be welcomed - as part of building a win-win partnership - a greater involvement of Governments at the federal and provincial levels; as well as affiliated institutions.

Finally, what is certain is that one of the major challenges for Arab countries in the coming years, particularly because of the changes taking place, will be the training and the quality of human resources. Indeed, it is the only inexhaustible and sustainable wealth for which Canada could contribute significantly to its development.

Please allow me to reiterate my sincere thanks to the Government of Canada and to the organizers for their commendable efforts and to express all the attention that will be given to the Forum's conclusions. We are convinced that those conclusions would carry new dynamics, both bilaterally and at our region's level.

La coopération arabo-canadienne est une coopération réellement et mutuellement avantageuse. Nos étudiants et universitaires profitent d'un enseignement et d'un encadrement de qualité, tandis que le Canada a des retombées financières et économiques puisque les étudiants formés ici deviennent des traits d'union et renforcent les échanges à leurs tours.

C'est pourquoi l'idée d'avoir un cadre régulier de consultation une fois au Canada et une fois dans un pays arabe nous paraît tout à fait appropriée pour traiter des obstacles éventuels dans le développement de cette coopération mais également tracer des objectifs et une stratégie commune pour le moyen et court terme.

Thank you, Merci.