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Press release

The General Organization for Physical Planning and the Governorate of Qena launch a land readjustment project aiming at stopping informal expansion in urban extension areas in cooperation with UN Habitat and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs

QENA, Egypt –19th December 2018

The Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities represented by the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP) and the Governorate of Qena have launched together with UN Habitat Egypt Office and the Embassy of Switzerland in Egypt the "Hayenna Integrated Urban Development project".

Hayenna project aims at enhancing urban development in Egypt through piloting innovative approaches related to urban planning and design, municipal finance and local economic development as well as the development of a number of recommendations for urban policies and legislation. The overall objective of the project is the development of a more transparent, efficient and sustainable methodology for land management as well as a participatory approach to the planning and implementation of infrastructure projects and the increase of local revenues as well as the more efficient public financial management.

The project, which will be running until 2023, is valued USD11.8 Million, with a contribution of USD8.1 Million by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and USD3.5 Million by the Egyptian government. The project is one of the biggest and most important projects of UN Habitat Egypt Office's portfolio.

The projects includes pilot projects in two governorates, the first of them Qena Governorate whereas the second will be selected during the first year of the project after consulting all participating partners. In Qena, two sites have been selected, one of them a city extension area and the other one an unplanned inner city area, each 100 feddan in size. The project will also implement some of the infrastructure projects that are indicated in the detailed plan for Qena governorate for the areas that are part of the project.

During the launching event, Mrs Corinne Henchoz Pignani, Head of the Office for International Cooperation of the Swiss Embassy in Egypt on behalf of H.E Ambassador Paul Garnier, Ambassador of Switzerland in Egypt, Eng. Alaa Abdelfatah, Head of the Central Administration for Planning Regions and national project manager of the project, Mrs Iman Radwan, Senior Programme Officer at the Swiss Embassy, Mrs Rania Hedeya, Country Director of the UN Habitat Egypt Office, Dr Nihal El Megharbel, Programme Manager of the Urban Governance, Legislation and Policy Programme (UN Habitat) and Dr Bassem Fahmy, Programme Manager of Strategic Planning and Urban Design Programme (UN Habitat) participated.

It is worth mentioning that the project agreements, including the project document, were signed by the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs in April 2018, and the separate agreement which was signed by the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Human Settlements Program in November 2018, whereas Dr Assem El Gazzar explained that the activities of the project are part of the implementation of the "National Strategic Plan 2052" and the "Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt Vision 2030" to achieve sustainable and balanced regional development, support the development of the local economy in the extension as well as in unplanned, and to provide decent and productive jobs opportunities. Qena governorate has been chosen as one of the pilot governorates for the implementation of the project since it is one of the priority governorates in the region of South Upper Egypt. El Gazzar also pointed to the Egyptian government's contribution of USD3.5 Million from the state budget as part of the State's socio-economic development plan.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the General Authority for Physical Planning and the Governorate of Qena. when General Abdelhamid El Haggan announced the issuance of the decree to form the "Project Implementation Unit (PMU)" at the local level in the governorate represented by the executive directors of the governorate, which will hold its meetings on a weekly basis to coordinate the various activities, directly supervise the implementation of the project in the pilot sites, follow up the implementation in accordance with the work plan, evaluate its results in accordance with the project performance indicators, participate in documenting the lessons learned, and to facilitate the communication with relevant stakeholders from civil society institutions, the private sector, landowners, academics as well as representatives of the relevant executive bodies at the local level. The unit will report to the PMU on a monthly basis. "El Haggan" stressed the importance of the public finance management component of the project in order to increase the local revenues of the governorate, which contributes to enhance the ability of local units to lead the urban development process in the governorate and ensure sustainability of the project by continuing the application of the project's methodology after its completion.

Mrs Henchoz Pignani expressed her pleasure to cooperate with the Egyptian government and the UN Habitat Egypt Office to implement the "Hayenna" project which is the first project in the field of urban development being implemented in the Arab Republic of Egypt. Yet, the project is an example for an integrated project since the project is not only about urban planning but tackles several aspects of development. She stressed the importance of achieving sustainability by developing the capacity of the employees at the local level in Qena in the field of integrated urban development and public finance, through recommendations on enhancing the preparation and implementation of detailed plans and financing them. Moreover, strengthening the local economy and creating jobs will contribute to the aspiration of young people. Dissemination of lessons learned to other governorates will be a first step to roll it out to the national level.

At the beginning of her speech, Mrs. Rania Hedeya thanked the stakeholders for their efforts in preparing the project and for the spirit of cooperation between all development partners from the Egyptian government, the Swiss state and UN Habitat. She stressed that the success of the project requires the support of the Ministry of Housing, GOPP, the support provided by the Swiss side, which is one of the main development partners in Egypt, the support of Qena governorate and its employees, and the experience of the UN Habitat in implementing such a project. She explained that UN Habitat has gained successful experiences in detailed planning of urban extension areas in Qalyubia governorate where UN Habitat's main principles of planning and urban development were translated into the Egyptian context. Mrs Hedeya added that one of the most important components of the project is to extract the lessons learned and recommendations to support the implementation and follow-up of the approaches in other areas and governorates. Also, she pointed out that the "monitoring and evaluation" during the various stages of project implementation is the basis for the success of the project.