

Fifth Jordan National Tempus Conference

University of Jordan, 14th December 2009

H.E. Professor Walid Ma'ani

Minister of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research

Honored and Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am very pleased to be with you today to welcome all of you to this important event, the Fifth Jordan National Tempus Conference. Your participation signifies the increasing interest in higher education and scientific research in Jordan as a major core element of national economic development. Your involvement also reflects your genuine interest in and desire to establish and strengthen progressive cooperation and partnership between Jordanian institutions of higher education and their European counterparts.

As many countries in the world, especially with the current prevailing recession, Jordan is facing a number of challenges in higher education and research. Based upon extensive consultations with all concerned stakeholders, the Ministry has developed the "National Strategy of Higher Education and Scientific Research". This Strategy addresses seven themes: governance and university administration, admission criteria, accreditation and quality control, scientific research and development of graduate studies, technical education and vocational training, financing, and university environment. A detailed action plan was also developed to implement the strategy components, and both the strategy and action plan were approved by the Cabinet. As far as higher education is concerned, our focus is essentially dual: capitalizing on the achievements and the successes on the one hand, and strengthening and enhancing those aspects which need further rectification and development on the other hand.

I am pleased to inform you today that under the direct guidance and support of His Majesty King Abdullah II, the Jordanian government is paying a great attention to education at the school level and to higher education and research. We aim at establishing a healthy and robust education system that

leads to the development, progress, and prosperity of our economic system that ultimately improves the quality of life of Jordanian citizens. This year has witnessed excellent achievements in the reform of higher education regulations, which sets a solid foundation to our continued reform efforts. The two most important Laws in this area, which are the "*Law of Higher Education and Scientific Research*" and the "*Law of Jordanian Universities*" have undergone major revisions and both Laws were approved by the Cabinet and endorsed by a Royal Decree and hence became effective as of September 2009. These Laws will grant higher education institutions more autonomy and will lead to more involvement of enterprises in university structures. They also greatly reduce the influence of public universities on the Council of Higher Education. According to these new laws, the Boards of Trustees of Jordanian universities have been re-established in November 2009. In addition to these regulations, the "*Law of Higher Education Institutions Accreditation Commission*" has been amended in 2009, in order to grant this Commission more independence from the Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research and more autonomy in its functions. All new laws deal with public and private universities in very much the same way, and this is a remarkable achievement in this regard.

The Government of Jordan places a primary emphasis on effective partnership initiatives between national institutions and those in European countries and many other countries around the world. We are very pleased to note that our European neighbors have made significant achievements in the reform of higher education, and there is a great cumulative experience from which we can benefit. The Bologna Process has become a world model that most countries, including the most leading nations in the world, are examining in detail to draw lessons and learn from. Likewise, we have a lot that we can also share with our European partners. I am sure you are all happy about the cooperation agreement in the field of science and technology that has just been signed between Jordan and the European Union. Under this Agreement, a joint committee will be formed to boost scientific research in various fields, particularly energy and sustainable development. We very much encourage you to make use of this Agreement

and get engaged with our European partners in research projects in these important disciplines and others. It is YOU, our valued faculty members at Jordanian universities, who give value and life to agreements and make them effective. You are the leaders who can influence and make change. The said Agreement provides the necessary framework within the appropriate environment, but it is only through the application of your creativity, commitment and effort that we will achieve the outcomes, and the successes, that we all desire.

Since the involvement of Jordan in the Tempus program in 2002, we are glad to note that Tempus has made good contributions towards the reform and development of higher education system and institutions in Jordan. Although the clear contributions were in curriculum reform, where a number of new Master's degree programs were developed through Tempus projects, we are glad to see that Tempus contributions went well beyond that. The benefits that students and faculty members gained from Tempus projects, the relations that were established through the projects among Jordanian and European universities, the links that were established between academia and enterprises through Tempus projects, and the many other achievements, are all well appreciated by the Ministry of Higher Education.

In closing, I would like to thank the European Commission and the Jordan National Tempus Office for both organizing this timely event and lending support to our efforts. The efforts of the Tempus Office in Jordan that led to the excellent reputation of the Tempus program and the high interest of Jordanian universities to participate in this program are highly appreciated by us. We would like to thank everyone for being here today and participating in this exciting and important event, and urge you to benefit further from the opportunities available through Tempus IV, Erasmus Mundus, and other EU programs. I offer you my best wishes for a most stimulating, enjoyable and successful time at this Fifth Jordan Tempus Conference.

May God bless our joint efforts and cooperation.