

**CHAIRS' STATEMENT BY QATAR AND THE UNITED STATES
ON THE SEPTEMBER 11 – 13, 2012 MEETING OF
THE ARAB FORUM ON ASSET RECOVERY
WITH THE DEAUVILLE PARTNERSHIP
WITH ARAB COUNTRIES IN TRANSITION**

The Governments of Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Guernsey, Italy, Japan, Jersey, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Liechtenstein, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States and Yemen, along with the European Union, met in Doha on September 11 – 13, 2012, to launch the Arab Forum on Asset Recovery and participate in its inaugural meeting. The meeting was hosted by the State of Qatar, in cooperation with the United States as G-8 chair, with the invaluable partnership of the Stolen Asset Recovery initiative (StAR) of the World Bank and UN Office on Drugs and Crime. Representatives of the United Nations, Arab League, Gulf Cooperation Council, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Egmont Group, and Interpol also participated.

Participants reaffirmed their commitment to the Asset Recovery Action Plan developed under the Deauville Partnership with Arab Countries in Transition. From the inception of the Partnership, asset recovery was recognized as an important goal to support democratic transition and economic development, and pursuit of the proceeds of corruption stowed abroad has since become a significant area for cooperation among the Deauville Partnership countries and other stakeholders.

We agreed that, in the wake of the Arab Spring, asset recovery has become a more urgent area of focus in the region and in the international community, building on the framework of the UN Convention against Corruption. Robust cooperation, including case assistance, capacity building and technical assistance, are necessary to advance asset recovery efforts.

In this context, the participants noted the value of the Arab Forum in providing a platform for:

- policy dialogue to raise awareness of and introduce the measures to facilitate effective asset recovery;
- regional training, and identification of needs for country-specific capacity building;
- developing a repository of information about asset recovery procedures, and good practices including mutual legal assistance and similar requirements of partner countries, translated in Arabic; and,
- developing a regional network of expertise.

We recognized the value of transparency in the facilitating effective cooperation and appreciated the efforts of many members of the G8 and additional countries in publishing a comprehensive guide describing the specific steps required for assistance and cooperation in matters related to tracing, freezing, confiscation, and return of proceeds of corruption. We noted the importance of providing materials in Arabic when possible and appreciated the efforts of the StAR initiative in developing a comprehensive website for all of these asset recovery guides, Forum documents, and other resources on asset recovery to serve as a central reference point on an ongoing basis. We encouraged a wider range of countries to make such guides available as an invaluable support to effective cooperation.

We agreed on the importance of having designated points of contact to facilitate inquiries related to asset recovery or mutual legal assistance requests and to identify them to relevant networks of practitioners. We also noted the importance of the intention of each transition country seeking the recovery of assets to create an Asset Recovery Task Force to serve as the focal point for the country in coordination and cooperation requests on asset recovery with the G8 and other countries.

We reaffirmed the usefulness of reviewing our legislation and practices to consider reforms, including in line with the elements set out in the Asset Recovery Action Plan that would streamline and facilitate cooperation.

We pledged to ensure that technical assistance is on-going and continues to be available from G8 and regional countries and international organizations to assist the transition countries in efforts to re-coup stolen assets. Participants reaffirmed that key topics for technical assistance should include financial investigations, financial document analysis, asset tracing, asset freezing and confiscation, requesting international assistance, asset recovery and asset management tools, and other topics identified by the requesting countries.

We agree that successful asset recovery faces a range of challenges, and that the complexities of building cases and pursuing international legal cooperation are not amenable to a quick fix, no matter how high the political will on each side. To facilitate these efforts, we recognized the value of legal and institutional reform to promote successful asset recovery efforts, as well as regular contact between practitioners to build trust, improve mutual understanding, and facilitate and accelerate the actual provision of assistance.

We reaffirmed our intent to continue collaboration to pursue follow-up on the Partnership Asset Recovery Action Plan, to conduct individual and joint action to show progress on its elements during 2013, with the support of our peers in the Partnership. We welcome the work of StAR, and other partners, to conduct activities in the coming months to support follow-up of the Action Plan, such as regional training and mentorship, and intend to provide our support and participation in such activities.

We expressed our deep appreciation to the State of Qatar for hosting this inaugural meeting of the Arab Forum on Asset Recovery. We look forward to continuing this critical work as a sign of the enduring partnership between our countries and our support for the transitions in the region and agreed to meet again in the coming year.

###