

9th PPD Global Workshop in Tunis

May 9, 2017

Speech by Mr. Néjib Chahed, Member of the Economic Commission, Union Tunisienne de l'Industrie, du Commerce et de l'Artisanat (UTICA)

Mr. Chahed made a speech in French on **Building a Coalition on Enterprise Development for Youth & Inclusion in Tunisia**. This presentation on the Public-Private Dialogue experience in Tunisia, he deemed, is a good occasion to renew commitment and share their experience and failures. It is important to evaluate efforts, characterize the PPD process in Tunisia as well as find practical parallels from other examples we can all learn from.

All efforts to define this practice create a difficulty in characterization for a number of key elements that define these processes. First, there are a multitude of stakeholders. To illustrate, Mr. Chahed mentioned the ministries and central administration, the various technical centers and public offices dedicated to a host of social and commercial issues, as well as private sector representatives including the national and bilateral chambers of commerce, business associations and the like.

Secondly, PPD is essentially a multiform exercise. It can be dedicated to particular sectors like the pharmaceuticals in Tunisia, which will be presented as a case study during this conference, or transversal one such is the case of the Council of Fiscal Issues. It can also be structured as cross community economic dialogue say on electronics and other areas. Furthermore, PPD can also be an informal process.

The third element is that interventions are varied. They can be on the sectorial level (e.g. technical center on chemistry) , regional level (e.g. UTICA regional councils), ministerial level (e.g. superior council on exports), management boards of public enterprises, etc.. “They are very different and varied and at times difficult to identify and classify,” stated the speaker. Therefore, what kind of principal conclusions or results can we expect of the PPD experience in Tunisia?

The observations and results are contrasting. In terms of results, we have clearly successful cases such as the ones in sectoral action such as the pharmaceuticals to be presented. We have also the National Business Agenda dealing with improvements in the business climate, a very interesting platform for handling inquiries about administrative hurdles and communicating them to a general directorate at the government with clear protocols for follow-up. On the other hand, there are also the failures. One such PPD example is in the textiles sector. “We are still looking for an equilibrium since we still seem at the beginning.”

Then, secondly, there are the “inadequacies” between texts and practices or intentions. For instance, the National Council on Fiscal Issues, which was created to reform the fiscal system and its conformity with fixed objectives (the texts). Its obligation was to meet at least once a year and we have not seen a dedicated effort in what is already a challenging condition for PPD.

The third observation is that there is a limited willingness to negotiate not only on the side of the public sector but also at times the private sector. This risk is to turn the process into a monologue rather than a dialogue as participants remain confined to their positions.

Fourth, we see a great dependence on the wishes of each party. That is, the process is often submitted to the voluntary engagement both on the public and the private side. Fifth, however, we have important successes when public representatives are close to the field, they have decision making influence and, importantly, chances are very high when the confines of the agenda are precise and limited. Sixth there is the absence of the evaluation of PPD, which is up to us to remedy. Lastly, PPD is often seen as an advantage on the execution level of public policies rather than their conceptualization.

In view of the above inadequacies, nonetheless, it should be recognized that successes as well as failures are the shared responsibility of both the public and private sectors. The question now is how to ameliorate PPD performance? Mr. Chahed remarked that it is a complex problematic, which is the subject of a significant amount of literature and various parameters (situations, objectives, nature of topics, capacity of players, etc.). In reality, we should talk about PPDs and not only a PPD because there are no unique solutions but only possible solutions. It is an activity where innovations can be adopted continuously. Among these, well organised and structured effort may be one way to improve PPD.

We should advance PPD in a very pragmatic and subtle way to meet shifting conditions said the speaker. The Micro approach and the Macro approach to PPD are only complementary to each other and not the contrary.

Would structuring PPD provide a solution to the challenges we have? To what measure PPD can help us meet the challenges in our society? This is indeed a collective responsibility.

We need to interrogate ourselves on these issues and draw conclusions that permit us to embark on a new generation of dialogue, which will help address this urgent matter in our development agenda.