

**The 'Jordan First' national campaign** was launched in October 2002 in order to strengthen the foundations of a pragmatic, democratic state. It is a working plan that seeks to deepen the sense of national identity among citizens where everyone acts as partners in building and developing the Kingdom. It is also an approach that banks on past achievements and seeks to open new doors for policies and programs in development, education, culture, and communication and information.

Jordan First, which was launched under the directives of King Abdullah II, emphasizes the pre-eminence of Jordan's interests above all other considerations and seeks to spread a culture of respect and tolerance and integrate and fortify the concepts of parliamentary democracy, supremacy of the law, public freedom, accountability, transparency, and equal opportunities. It targets a generation of young Jordanians, who pride themselves in their Homeland and their Monarch's throne and who beam with their democracy and effective, responsible participation in shaping their parliamentary institutions to be both accountable for, and loyal to Jordan.

### **The Concept Of 'Jordan First'**

*Following are the ten concepts that elucidate and clarify the motto and demonstrate its noble goals:*

**"Jordan First"** is a project of renaissance and awakening. It stimulates the strengths of individuals and the society, consummates the work started by the predecessors and the early architects of the Nation and heralds a new era of economic, social, political, cultural and educational development. It releases the full potential of young Jordanian men and women and invigorates their ingenious work originating from their pride in belonging to their Homeland.

**"Jordan First"** is a social accord between Jordanian men and women, individuals and groups, the Government and the opposition. It emphasizes the supremacy of Jordan's interests over all other considerations and reformulates the individual's relationship with the State, equally dedicated to all males and females. From the State, citizens expect justice, equality, the Rule of Law, transparency and accountability and are duty-bound to respecting its laws and dignity, safeguarding its constants, protecting its stability and national security, and defending its interests faithfully and with dedication.

**"Jordan First"** is a melting pot that fortifies the national fabric for all Jordanian men and women and respects the diversity of their propensities, origins, attitudes, races and feelings. It seeks to integrate them nationally and socially in such a manner as to utilize our Jordanian pluralism as a source of strength for a modern, coherent civil society that prospers in climates of freedom, parliamentary democracy, supremacy of the Law, social justice, and equal opportunities.

**"Jordan First"** is an investment in the Jordanian people, in his/her education, rehabilitation, training, health and well being. It prepares Jordanians for a future that promises scholarship, knowledge and accomplishment.

**"Jordan First"** consecrates the concept of citizenship as a basic Constitution-guaranteed right that cannot be violated. It is a positive element that stimulates the intensification of political participation and the overstepping of negative trends. It has but one heading: "No one is more privileged than others except in what he/she offers to his/her Homeland and people."

**"Jordan First"** is an invitation to all institutions in our civil society, including political parties, professional and labor unions and community-based organizations, to rearrange their priorities each in accordance with its competence, to be inspired by understanding the spirit and contents of this concept. They are called upon to seek to raise their own contribution to this rejuvenating project, which aims at building a modern Jordan. They are also asked to focus on

achieving economic, social, and political development; creating productive opportunities; fighting poverty and unemployment and improving the citizen's standard of living.

**“Jordan First”** appeals to the media, as well as all institutions concerned with national guidance, to embrace the Homeland's causes and the citizen's issues in an atmosphere of pluralism, responsible freedom, independence, and cultivated professionalism. They should be intent on precision, objectivity and respect for the truth and the citizen's intellect and rights.

**“Jordan First”** is to guarantee the role of a nationalist opposition in the country on the basis of respecting the Constitution and the laws and priorities of the Nation. The opposition should be to the practices and policies of the government, rather than the constants of the State.

**“Jordan First”** reiterates that a strong, honorable and invincible Jordan is a source of power and capability to the Arab Nation and a lever for the enhancement of the steadfastness of our kin and brethren in Palestine, relying in that on an uninterrupted legacy of adherence to national interests.

**“Jordan First”** is a philosophy of governance, as well as an approach to leadership. It stands on the imperative of placing Jordan's national interest in the forefront of all the considerations of the State and the homeland, Government and civil society. The philosophy does not fall back on issues of concern to the Arab Nation, or isolate the country from the wider Islamic circle, in the focal point of which Jordan, under the Hashemites, has always been. According to the Constitution, the Jordanian people are “part of the Arab Nation” and “Islam is the religion of the State.”

#### **'Jordan First' Implementation Mechanisms**

*In order to turn this concept into reality, sets of mechanisms and applicable actions have been identified as follows:*

##### **1. The Government: The Challenge:**

To address the weakness in relations between individuals and institutions; establishing and abiding by the principles of accountability, transparency and equal opportunities as ongoing guidelines for the Jordanian State, which the various institutions are requested to safeguard; rally forces around adherence to the spirit of the Jordanian Homeland on the basis of tolerance and opportunity; and prevent the tyranny of the propensity to infringe upon the national and social fabric.

##### **Suggested Actions:**

- It is incumbent upon Governments to translate the values and principles of social justice, equality, and the supremacy of the Law, systematically, methodologically, and to develop the “civil service” concept as a basis for the relationship between employees and citizens in a framework of transparency and accountability.
- Governments should implant the democratic approach, including raising the ceiling for public freedoms as guaranteed by the Constitution and valid laws.
- Governments should seek to consecrate the concept of citizenship, deepen the national identity, relinquish aspects of excess, extremism, polarization, and the propensity to harm national unity and abuse the national fabric, and spread a culture of tolerance and respect of others.
- Governments should lay down plans and programs to guarantee the distribution of the fruits of development, especially in poor, remote and less advantaged areas. They should also expand the Economic and Social Transformation Program, both horizontally and vertically, and allocate the required resources thereto in a manner that guarantees the reflection of economic growth at the level of the citizens' standard of living. Governments are also called upon to strive to improve the basic services provided to citizens.

- Governments should intensify their efforts to enhance the citizens' productivity and alleviate poverty and unemployment.
- Governments should pay special attention to municipalities and seek to consecrate a democratic approach in selecting competent municipal councils.
- Governments should direct more attention to the environment, in terms of legislation, procedures, awareness-raising and practice, in such a manner as to harmonize with the requirements of sustainable development.
- Governments should guarantee the freedom of the flow of information from the Government's ministries and other departments to the competent monitoring bodies, the press and the media.
- Governments should review all legislation related to human rights and the status of women, children and the family in order to comply with those international agreements, which the Kingdom has ratified.

## **2. Parliament:**

### **The Challenge:**

The Jordanian parliamentary process, important and inveterate as it has suffered from several challenges, such as interruption and dissolution before the expiry of its term, the weakness and occasional absence of political blocs from the successive parliaments, and election laws that do not help in electing parliaments that strive towards achieving progress.

### **Suggested Actions:**

- Parliament is a democratic lever and an incubator of Jordanian pluralism, where the will of Jordanian men and women converge through their representatives. Hence, its continuous strong presence in the political and legislative life should be adhered to. When enacting election laws, we should strive to guarantee sound representation, equity and the empowerment of all vital powers and competent patriotic personalities to enable them to serve in the House of Parliament.
- Consecrate the constitutional base by conducting parliamentary elections on time.
- Conduct early awareness campaigns to guarantee the widest possible popular participation in elections, organize intensive seminars and other special television programs and press campaigns to this purpose, and find the ways and means to stimulate the citizens' participation in elections and urge them to elect those who will serve Jordan and adopt the Homeland's best interests.
- In this area, the youth and universities sector should be singled out for special attention, especially after lowering the minimum age of voting to 18 years.
- Election laws should observe the goals of political and partisan development and the empowerment of women to elect and be elected and guarantee the actual election of women to Parliament (a women's quota, provided that it is temporary and transitional).
- Parliamentary performance should be developed and improved with a view to activate parliament's self-monitoring and to guarantee the representatives' observance of their constitutional duties as specified in valid laws and regulations. Thus, the legislators' integrity in performance would be guaranteed. Furthermore, members of parliament should not abuse their position to achieve special or personal benefits. The process of enacting legislation should be expedited and measures should be adopted to allow legislators to carry out their duties in the best possible manner.
- The period of membership in the House of Representatives should be considered for inclusion in retirement plans.

## **3. The Judiciary:**

### **The Challenge:**

- Coping with recent developments in the economic, social, technological, scientific and communications fields.
- Addressing the issue of inadequacy in the training of judges.
- Deciding court cases within periods of time that guarantee the rights of parties to the litigation.

**Suggested Actions:**

- Proceed with the reforms, accomplished in the judiciary system in the recent years with a view to enhancing its independence and efficiency.
- Contribute towards modernizing legislation to cope with recent developments in the economic, social, technological, scientific and environmental fields.
- Support the judiciary with sufficient numbers of new qualified judges.
- Expedite the settlement of court cases.
- Modernize and provide court houses with the requirements for implementing their venerable tasks.
- Consider the possibility of establishing a Constitutional Court at the appropriate time.

**4. Political Parties:**

**The Challenge:**

Jordan's partisan experience, rich and inveterate as it is, still faces many challenges. These challenges include fragmentation, the aversion of citizens from political parties and the absence of patriotic, economic, social and political programs. They also include adherence to ideologies and slogans, which have proved to be failures in the experience of other nations and the weakness of democracy inside the parties themselves. Furthermore, some parties revolve around the personality of the 'leader', while others are financially and organizationally dependent on external influences. Imbalances are also caused by the absence of large parties, as well as the suspicions and some constraints imposed upon the parties.

**Suggested Actions:**

- There can be no democracy without political parties. Parties are national institutions, which must be safeguarded. The potential power of Jordan's partisan experience should be addressed and it suffices not only to criticize the parties' negative aspects. Political parties should be encouraged to merge and form larger blocs to open the way for alternating executive power amongst themselves.
- The "Jordan First" concept should be adopted as a guiding motto for political parties and an organizer for their programs. Each party should abandon its external connections that contravene the Law.
- Traditions of systematic institutional dialogue should be established between the Government and the political parties, whatever their positions, and among the parties themselves, in order to facilitate the exchange of views and consultance.
- The Political Parties Law should be amended with a view to ending fragmentation by raising the minimum number of founders and stipulating adequate financing for political parties in accordance with specific controls that allow for measurement of the popularity and influence of parties.
- Transparency and democratic performance should be deepened within the parties.
- The establishment of political parties on regional, racial or religious considerations should not be permitted.
- The "tendency to create suspicions" in political parties should be restricted and precise distinction should be exercised between criticizing the negative aspects of the Jordanian experience in political parties and raising doubts about the very idea of establishing political parties. This should be observed in action, activity and information.

- Political parties have the right to express their ideological and political positions through the different national information and media institutions. They also have the right to exercise their activities without any coercion, but within the law.
- There should be complete separation between partisan work and houses of worship.
- The budgets of political parties should be completely separate from the different forms of fund-raising that are not connected to the declared political programs of these parties.
- Parties should distance themselves from schools and clubs and no party may politicize a university or educational institution the own.
- Parties should uphold the Constitution and the Law and seek to deepen the democratic choice, safeguard pluralism, strengthen national unity, and comply with the supremacy of the Law. In turn, they should provide a model of transparency and reciprocal disclosure, distance themselves from narrow factionalism, demonstrate a spirit of national responsibility in all their practices, and provide care to the youth and women's sectors.

## **5. Professional Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations:**

### **The Challenge:**

Professional associations are houses of inveterate expertise, whose experiences are a credit to Jordan not against it. These associations have played a very important role in organizing and improving the professions and safeguarding the rights and gains of their members. The associations play an economic and social role as incubators of wider sectors of the middle class in Jordan. Their trust funds can become a significant developmental role.

The adherence of professional associations and Non-Governmental Organizations to their own laws is above all arguments and transparency in their work is inevitable. Democracy and pluralism should be safeguarded in the work of professional associations and Non-Governmental Organizations, whose practices may not in any case be tinged with any specific political or ideological color. They should stick to their professional role as specified in the Law.

### **Suggested Actions:**

- Professional associations and Non-Governmental Organizations are pioneering institutions of civic society, whose activities are governed by the Law, which enacted their existence in the first place. Their own actions should lie within, and may not contravene public law.
- The main function, for which the associations have been created, is restricted to raising the quality of the professions, safeguarding the rights of their members, and serving the community.
- A general review of the laws governing these associations would guarantee the organization of relationships among the professionals themselves, as well as their relationship with the State and society.
- These institutions should adhere to transparency in their activities, membership and resources and should be subject to accountability for any violation of the law.
- Governments should respect the various institutions and organizations of the society and facilitate their activities in accordance with the Law in such a manner as to deepen the citizen's belongingness and raise the quality of services provided to the citizens.

## **6. The Press and Media:**

### **The Challenge:**

The press and other national media are a lever for deepening awareness of the “Jordan First” concept and disseminating its message. It is inevitable that getting ready for the motto must rely on the development of a new Jordanian information model that draws inspiration from the spirit of the age, serves the objectives of the State and the Society, expresses the consciousness of the Homeland, and reflects the will of its sons and daughters. The Jordanian information model we want, places Jordanian national interests in the forefront of its priorities and takes into consideration the interests of both individuals and groups. It raises an important developmental and educational message for the upcoming generations. For these reasons, it is an information of the State and the Homeland, a pluralistic information that exercises its monitoring role in responsible freedom.

Jordan's information effort has had significant accomplishments at the different levels. Yet, these accomplishments do not belittle the challenges that face this sector, because the need is dire for the empowerment of Jordan's electronic and print national media to brace up to meet the crisis in its discourse and address the weakness of its credibility. The Jordanian media should be empowered to make up for the regression in their impact, locally and abroad, and overcome excess and lack of professionalism in some newspapers, as well as the conservative performance of others.

#### **Suggested Actions:**

- Develop the work of the Higher Council of Media to enable it to contribute towards the progress and organization of the profession and to lay the foundations for a State and Homeland media.
- Activate and revise the laws governing the press and the information effort to enable the raising of the ceiling for responsible freedom, promoting professional standards, focusing on national priorities, and ending foreign penetrations of the media through accountability.
- Enable the press and other media to access sources of information.
- Enable political and other parties to attend national media and press rostrums.
- Empower the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation to undertake its national mission as a voice expressing the ambitions of Jordan's males and females, a mirror depicting its accomplishments, and a forum for pluralistic dialogue as a main vehicle to embody the concept of State media

### **7. Schools, Universities and Youth:**

#### **The Challenge:**

- Jordan's future is a right for its young men and women, who constitute more than two thirds of the population. There is no alternative to firmly establishing the “Jordan First” concept in the minds and consciences of our youth through implanting the values of belongingness, participation, work, production and accomplishment. A new view of the status of women has to be developed among the young, starting with the home, through school and university, and ending with youth organizations. This predicated going ahead with programs aimed at alleviating poverty and unemployment, accomplishing balanced development, spreading democracy, human rights values and the principles, justice, equality and equity, and polishing the skills of youth in the direction that meets the requirements of development, knowledge and the future.

Jordan prides itself in its accomplishments in the areas of education and youth care. Yet, it still faces several challenges, including the rising rates of poverty and unemployment, the abstention of the youth from participation and working in many positions and locations, the prevalence of some aspects of extremism and secondary allegiances, and the imbalance in values pertaining to belonging to the Homeland.

#### **Suggested Actions:**

- Prepare school and university curricula to teach youth and the upcoming generations the principles embodied in the Constitution, as well as the history, intellectual legitimacy and constitutional monarchy of the State. These curricula should also implant values of democracy, justice, equality, and citizenship, as well as the rights and duties of citizens and national unity.
- Qualify educators to perform this role.
- Prepare extra-curricular school and university programs in order to deepen and disseminate these concepts to the largest possible extent among young men and women with a view to serving the community.
- Pay attention to student and youth councils and unions, deepen democratic practices, and try and find the appropriate mechanism to guarantee the widest possible participation.
- Direct due attention and allocate the required financial resources to research and specialized scientific studies at universities and link these activities with the needs of the different national sectors.
- Find the required mechanisms to encourage, stimulate and nurture creativity and distinction and support gifted and exceptional students in universities.
- Raise the standard of education at a balanced extent in all the Kingdom's Governorates.
- Direct activities at sports clubs and cultural meetings to serve the concepts of participation, integration, national unity, development and community service.

## **8. The Private Sector:**

### **The Challenge:**

The stage through which the Jordanian economy is passing provides the private sector with an opportunity to play the role of prime mover of development. This entails certain rights and duties that qualify this sector to participate in the economic and social decision-making. It is this sector's duty to contribute towards investing in the Jordanian citizen increasing his/her productivity, provide work for him/her in productive and feasible projects that transfer, adopt and develop technology, and contribute towards upgrading management. All of this is bound to guarantee the contribution of this important sector in placing the Homeland's interests among its priorities. Thus, this sector will have become inspired by the "Jordan First" concept.

The long strides this sector has made along the road to economic participation are being confronted by several challenges, including; weak initiative, continuous reliance on governmental roles, weak management, the prevalence of certain aspects of corruption, and abuse of citizens' rights, properties and quality of services provided to them.

### **Suggested Actions:**

- Encourage the private sector to activate its participation in the service of the community, increase its contribution to sponsoring the different activities, adhere to the values of national unity and the criteria of efficiency, and distance itself from the different aspects of discrimination.
- Urge the private sector to assume the leading role in linking the outputs of education with the requirements of the labor market through contributing in the preparation of training and educational programs that aim to qualifying young Jordan men and women and stimulate this sector to invest directly and continuously in scientific research and studies.
- Give priority to the employment of Jordanian men and women and contribute towards their training and qualification.
- Urge the private sector to invest in the various national economic areas, especially in major developmental projects.
- Pursue the process of modernizing the legislative, administrative, judicial and procedural infrastructures, which stimulate and encourage private investment in the various economic facilities.