

ARABOSAI COMMENTS
JUNE 8, 2004

Thank you Your Excellency Osama Faquih of South Arabia for that kind introduction and excellent summary. I would also like to thank His Excellency Salem Al-Kazaleh of Jordan for the invitation to join you in Amman and for his office's warm hospitality and capable organization of this conference. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to address several issues of mutual interest and concern. Before I begin my formal presentation, I'd like to note that, while this is my first trip to Jordan, it is my fourth trip to the Middle East, and the second time that I have visited the region in the past eight months. These trips have helped me to better understand the issues of concern to the people of this region, including the importance of the Palestinian issue, along with the many cultural and other differences that exist.

I, along with many of you, have had the good fortune to engage in extensive international travel during my lifetime. One thing that I have found is that, in order to appreciate the many differences in the various countries and cultures that make up our world, you have to travel. Being there makes a real difference. In my opinion, some things have to be seen and experienced first hand, because reading about them is just not enough. In my opinion, such is the case for the countries in this region as well as the United States.

My travels and activities as Comptroller General have served to re-enforce my belief that the world is, rightly or wrongly, growing smaller every day. My travels as comptroller general have helped me to realize that many of our countries, clients, and offices face a range of common challenges that have no geo-political boundaries. As a result, it is becoming increasingly important that we work together and across boundaries on a range of issues of mutual interest and concern. As INTOSAI's motto notes, "Mutual experience benefits all." As SAIs, it is important that we work together on a professional, objective, fact-based and non-political basis. By working together, we can learn from each other, share in each other's successes, and avoid each other's mistakes. This will help us to better serve our clients, countries, and citizens. Our actions can also serve to build bridges between nations and help to show others the way forward. After all, in today's world, no country and no SAI can or should go it alone.

We are living in a time of many changes and challenges. These changes and challenges include a number of transitions and transformation efforts. The question is, what does it mean to us as SAIs? One of the presentations that has been distributed to you, "The Evolving Role of SAIs," addresses this issue. It notes the importance of SAIs leading by example and engaging in a range of oversight, insight, and foresight activities designated to improve the performance and ensure the accountability of government. It also notes that, as SAIs, we have an opportunity to help modernize the accountability profession around the world, both in the public and private sectors. You may find the information to be of some interest. My second presentation relates to INTOSAI's Strategic Planning Task Force which the United States has the privilege to chair. I'd like to review it for you now. I'd be pleased to take questions at any time.