Distinguished Delegates, 
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to be with you today for the opening of the first regional High-level Forum of Directors-General (DGs) for Development Cooperation. My deep appreciation goes to the State of Qatar for hosting this EXPO. I wish to thank the UN Office for South-South Cooperation and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States for co-organizing and facilitating dialogues such as this one. I thank the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for its continued, instrumental support and to the Islamic Development Bank for co-sponsoring this initiative.

As the economic prospects of the South have risen, so too have the vitality and strength of South-South cooperation. This we have clearly witnessed here, in the Arab States region and in other parts of the developing world. The role of South-South and triangular cooperation has gained wider acceptance in the international community.

While we see the growing significance of South-South Cooperation, our tasks are also growing in size and complexity. As far as development, and development cooperation are concerned, the international community is at crossroads. On one hand we head towards the target date of 2015 for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). On the other hand we continue our deliberations on the Post-2015 development agenda.

Therefore, the questions for this forum seem to be two-fold. How can we shape our efforts to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and how do we make sure that South-South and triangular cooperation will be ready to assume its role, in the implementation of the post 2015 agenda.

Much depends on the fulfilment of MDG-8 – the global partnership for development and on building on the lessons learned. While the international community is setting the common goals and targets for the development agenda, it is clear that its implementation, the achievement of those goals will depend on the actions of individual Countries and on their cooperation.

Evidence shows that solutions and cooperation becomes more and more concrete as we get closer to the ground. It is not a surprise. South-South development partners team up more easily because they know the challenges, the environment, and also the opportunities. This is even more striking in the case of regional cooperation. While sustainable development solutions will have to be explored and implemented at every level, it is my firm conviction that regional cooperation can play a much stronger role in the future. Development is bringing solutions closer to the challenges and answering to people’s real needs. This is an area, where South-South and regional cooperation can surpass all other forms of cooperation. It can easily translate accumulated knowledge into actions that ensure that positive changes happen on the ground.

This is why I also strongly encourage you to scale up your support to the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation to enable it to mainstream South-South and triangular cooperation into all areas of development.
Finally, let me bring you back to the issues at hand for today, while looking into the future. One of the major issues that the High Level Committee is grappling with, is to explore the opportunities of South-South cooperation related to the post 2015 agenda. It is presumable that without harnessing enhanced South-South and Triangular Cooperation the international community will not be able to reach their goals. It is also clear that the international community will have to act in a coordinated manner. As the UN Secretary-General repeatedly confirmed it, we have to deliver as one. These principles beg the following questions:

- Are you satisfied with the role of South-South and triangular and most importantly, regional cooperation in the last phase of the MDG process? What are the lessons learned with regard to MDG8?
- How should South-South and triangular and regional cooperation be positioned in advancing the post 2015 agenda?
- How can the regional cooperation of Arab States better shape the implementation of the post 2015 agenda globally, and also on the national level?

Without putting pressure on ourselves, a lot will depend on what answers do we give to those questions. Based on the many topics included in today’s agenda, I am convinced that the meeting can attack these issues head on.

With that, I thank you for your kind attention and I wish you/us successful deliberations today.