

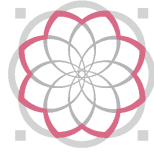
**annd**

Arab NGO Network for Development  
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

# **Policy position by Arab CSOs during the Advocacy Week to European Institutions 2016**

**The Call of ANND Delegation to the European Union  
in shouldering its historical responsibility on cement-  
ing a global partnership to create a significant zone of  
political, social, economic and cultural cooperation**

**December 22, 2016**



annd

Arab NGO Network for Development  
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

## Introduction

*“The European Union and Arab world have throughout the years been sharing a destiny of geographical proximity, economic and political cooperation on many fronts. The two major worlds have a long history of cross-fertilization and human and cultural exchanges that had shaped their heritage and shared history and values. However, a legacy of conflicts and misunderstandings has in many instances affected both worlds’ ability to leverage this natural complementarity in order to establish strategic partnerships and create a global Euro-Arab zone of stability and prosperity. Both the European Union and the Arab world shoulder a historical responsibility to overcome all hindrances, real and imagined, and work hard on cementing a global partnership that could easily create one of the significant zones of political and economic cooperation in the world.”*

The first ever High Level EU-Arab World Forum that took place in Greece on November 3rd and 4th, 2016 affirmed the significance of the EU-Arab partnership as quoted above. We, as civil society groups from the Arab region, were not part of this forum and could not raise our perspective on ‘shifting to a new paradigm on EU-Arab partnership’ as one of the key topics of the Forum.

However, since the 2011 uprisings, we have been organizing direct advocacy meetings to the European Union in order to meet key EU officials and policy-makers and raise our reflections and recommendations that emanate from a vast research work and workshops conducted at national and regional levels. Our objectives aim to tackle different social, economic and political aspects of the partnership.

A new narrative in the EU-Arab partnership is what we have called for in the 2011 revision of the ENP, what applies to the new ENP adopted in 2015 as well. We have actively monitored the implementation of the EU-Arab partnership over two decades since the Barcelona Declaration and continuously called for a partnership that serves development, human rights, peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean shores, ensuring mutual responsibility and accountability. Yet, when the so-called paradigm shift remains on a limited Euro-centric discourse and focuses on addressing challenges such as terrorism, refugees and migration with a security-based approach; and when collaboration is sought on trade, investment, infrastructure support, energy and tourism sectors principally and in a short-sided vision, we consider that the expected outcomes will remain limited without addressing the genuine needs of the people in the region.

In this context and in light of the recent developments, including the revision of the European Consensus on Development, European Migration Framework, the launching of the European External Investment Plan and the role that the EU-Arab partnership is currently playing in the implementation of the Agenda 2030, we jointly adopted this policy position to raise our key concerns:

1. Migration, and refugee-related concerns are of a high priority for the European Union and the European citizens including the reactions to the significant wave of migrants to Europe and the terrorist attacks in France, Belgium and Germany past years. In relation, within the EU agenda and as well in the implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy, there is an increasing focus on migration and counter-terrorism. HRVP Mogherini affirms the importance of partnerships in addressing migration as a global issue and confirms that we have to work together with shared responsibilities and with common solutions<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, shifting the ENP focus from addressing inequalities and ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights, democracy and freedom towards being a tool to cope with refugee crisis is a challenging move. Indeed, this shift would endanger the partnership to be a real tool to foster respect for cultural diversity as well. It is alarming that in eight of the 10 European nations surveyed<sup>2</sup>, the anti-immigrant concerns are in rise: half or more consider incoming refugees will increase the likelihood of terrorism in their country. In this context, the European Union should ensure that the ENP implementation focusses on addressing inequalities at various levels: geographical, racial and ethnic, religious, age and gender-based as the key priority within the new set of partnership priorities agreed. This should be supported with enhancing productive capacities and policy revision on trade, investment, development, and aid policies ensuring policy coherence.

<sup>1</sup> Speech by High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the EU Side Event: Investing in partnership, a European External Investment Plan to achieve the SDGs and address root causes of Migration

<sup>2</sup> by Pew Research Center <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/07/11/europeans-fear-wave-of-refugees-will-mean-more-terrorism-fewer-jobs/>



annd

Arab NGO Network for Development  
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

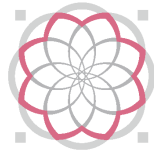
2. High concerns due to refugee flows and illegal migration result in greater emphasis of 'security' in ENP implementation, as well as the Migration Policy Framework (MPF) itself. **Indeed, priorities set within the MPF are based on Euro-centric security concerns.** These are saving lives at sea, increasing returns, enabling migrants and refugees to stay closer to home and, in the long term, helping third countries' development in order to address the root causes of irregular migration<sup>3</sup>. In fact, around 5 million Syrian refugees have been in neighboring countries for close to 6 years now. This obviously constitutes a significant development challenge in these countries but also lead to human rights' violations for refugees. Indeed, the EU's choice of prioritizing refugees to stay closer to home, is not an act of burden-sharing but mere burden-transferring to neighboring countries. Despite the EU's legal obligations deriving from international human rights law, being a state party to related UN treaties, the EU's security concerns are high at-stake in this approach. The adopted EU2017 budget, allocating more money to boost protection on Europe's borders and aid crime prevention and counter-terrorism activities reveals the security-concerns dominating EU agenda as well. In this context, **the European Union should revise the approach, shifting to a rights-based migration policy with a more efficient responsibility-sharing system, deconstructing the discourse of the securitization of borders. Indeed, the mere focus on EU-border security is the basis for the multiplication of dangers on the migratory routes into EU and strengthens the smuggling networks. In addition, the EU should take clearer steps dealing with security risks on both sides. In particular, the flow of European extremist combatants to the Arab countries should be stopped, and a policy should be clearly implemented to tackle with the now returning combatants and their families from the zones controlled by IS.**

3. Similarly, there remains the problematic of the development assistance to be allocated for 'helping member states resettle refugees, create reception centers for migrants, integrate those who have the right to stay in Europe and send back those who do not'<sup>4</sup>. Owing the big differences between member states policies and practices with refugees, additional mechanisms should be created to assist member states' civil societies to cope with refugees (lodging, language teaching, integration in the society, etc.). Nevertheless, ODA should be about addressing inequalities and development challenges and the EU should escape using its **ODA in more security-related expenditure and as a tool to pursue its own security agenda.** Indeed, given the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) High Level Meeting in February 2016, the change introduced in ODA-eligibility remains a key concern for Southern partners. Considering security, defense, humanitarian and integration of the migrants' expenditures as eligible part of ODA would hamper the means of implementation for sustainable development and the Agenda 2030. **The EU's commitment towards development effectiveness principles, including national ownership, transparency, partnerships for development and mutual accountability should be firm. Adherence to these principles, together with policy coherence for development as key in preventing any negative aspects that the EU policies directed to the region (trade, investment, migration, development and aid...etc.) can result into.**

4. **Private Investment and infrastructure support remain as the key areas of collaboration between the EU and the region towards ensuring 'inclusive growth'.** The experience of the region reveals that mere growth has not lead to development, equality and prosperity. In this respect, the ENP implementation should follow clear benchmarks on inclusive growth, so that it ensures equitable social protection, fair wealth distribution, just taxation...etc. Moreover, ensuring full enjoyment to human rights, to food, water, decent housing, education and employment for all should be at the center of the infrastructure support provided. Within this support, the partnership priorities further introduce the engagement of the European financial institutions in the region, as providing opportunities for the private sector and enabling financial interventions. **The continuous promotion of the private sector by the EU should be with a clear mandate that private sector engagement enhances productivity and competitiveness in partner countries as well as the improvement of productive sectors with added-value production.** This promotion of private sector should be more focused on getting small and medium enterprises out of informality as they constitute the major source of employment. Nevertheless, the lack of any mechanism enhancing transparency, accountability and responsibility is the main challenge in this regard. Indeed, a legally binding international instrument on business and Human Rights is still missing. In this light, whereas EU's commitment to UN Guiding Principles in the 2016 UN Business and Human

<sup>3</sup> [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-16-2072\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-2072_en.htm)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.euractiv.com/section/eu-priorities-2020/news/2017-eu-budget-adopted-with-more-for-migration-security/?utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_campaign=Echobox&utm\\_source=Facebook&utm\\_term=Autofeed#link\\_time=1480670620](http://www.euractiv.com/section/eu-priorities-2020/news/2017-eu-budget-adopted-with-more-for-migration-security/?utm_medium=Social&utm_campaign=Echobox&utm_source=Facebook&utm_term=Autofeed#link_time=1480670620)



annd

Arab NGO Network for Development  
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

Rights forum<sup>5</sup> is welcome, indeed the EU is expected to champion the protection of the rights and the binding standards from the different threats whether from the public, private or military sectors and for the adoption of a legally binding instrument. Furthermore, the implementation of the ENP, while encouraging private sector engagement should be as well towards fighting corruption, informality, tax havens and illicit financial flows. Accordingly, the EU should ensure the regular reporting of European businesses and private companies on tax payments, along with their impacts on sustainable development and human rights.

5. Given that the discussions on the regulation of the European Fund for Sustainable Development will be held in December, we take the opportunity to raise our concerns with regard to the European External Investment Plan/Platform that will benefit from the EFSD for the Neighborhood. The Plan aims to boost the potential of the European private sector to invest in the partner countries, yet without any commitment for private sector transparency and guarantee for accountability. Furthermore the plan envisages dialogue on public-private partnerships, thus has a strong push on implementation of the neo-liberal economic model in partner countries. This model has long been followed by the Arab countries, resulting in inequalities and injustices at several levels. This model favored crony capitalism increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of few leaving the majority behind. Moreover, with regard to PPPs promotion, country cases reveal that most PPPs are related to the simple privatization of existence providers of public services, with no significant improve of these services and infrastructures. They fail to achieve their goals as well as preserving citizens' rights due to lack of competent and efficient public institutional framework. The EU should ensure that hybrid finance and public-private contracts should also be subject to compulsory transparency and accountability safeguards in compliance with the human rights' norms and standards whereby human rights and generalization of access to all public services come before profit. In this regard, it is critical that an inclusive, equal, transparent partnership are the key principles in implementation of the European Neighborhood Investment Platform. Respect for country ownership, public goods and services, and ensuring multi-stakeholder dialogues on allocation of resources, sectors, and projects chosen should be ensured for development outcomes. Moreover, consultation with the civil society should be taken as an opportunity to address development needs more effectively and efficiently. Similarly, the proposed European Defense Fund should be monitored as research on military would not create the same development impacts that investment enhancing productive sectors could. Otherwise, the Fund should also consider mechanisms for exchange of students and researchers, and of collaborative research projects which could foster technology transfer.

6. As the consultation launched on the European Consensus on Development revealed, inclusiveness is key for achieving sustainable development. Nevertheless, development initiatives in the region consider civil society participation on an ad-hoc basis. Ad hoc, temporary, and non-transparent mechanisms (i.e. consultations) remain insufficient to include the voices and concerns of civil society. In this respect the initiatives of the EU on Structured Dialogue is much welcome. Increasing shrinking civic space in the Southern Neighborhood and the adoption of draconian laws on association (i.e. Egypt) as well as the security measures and austerity policies in different countries including in the EU are restricting CSO and limiting their ability to influence the public decision making. This necessitates the fast launch and effective implementation of a South-led regional structured dialogue that should be then the mean to empower civil society groups and allow them to contribute to the EU-Arab partnership at different levels and sectors. In parallel, particularly given that increasing humanitarian projects supported by the EU are implemented in the region, EU should ensure financial assistance for civil society should be used as a tool to empower civil society both in the south and in the north without framing its work or limiting its independence. Given that, in most cases, these projects are implemented with European and local NGOs, the EU should ensure that these projects are built on partnerships that respect equality, transparency and mutual accountability principles.

7. Finally, restating our firm commitment to democracy and peace in the region, we note that the focus on migration and security can overshadow the much needed focus on peace in the region. Enhancing peace and ensuring that Sustainable Development Goal 16 must remain the priority, as well for the implementation of the Agenda 2030. This dictates the recognition of freedom, dignity, justice, participation, citizenship as well as sovereignty and the right to self-determination as key components of stability. In this respect, the

5 [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/5th\\_forum\\_on\\_business\\_and\\_human\\_rights\\_-\\_eu\\_contribution.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/5th_forum_on_business_and_human_rights_-_eu_contribution.pdf)

recognition of the EU with regard to the right to boycott Israel as a right of expression is welcome. In this regard, we reiterate our support to BDS movement and call EU to suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement which is sending Israel the message that it does not have to abide by international laws and adding to the impunity and lack of accountability of Israeli violations. Also, the EU should clearly engage itself to bring peace initiatives and perspectives to Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, taking a more neutral position towards the present confrontation between the actors around the Arab-Persian Gulf.

As civil society from the Arab region, we continue to play our roles in protecting human rights, promoting social justice and building peace and security at national, regional and international levels with calls to mutual accountability among all development actors. Our calls to the EU are as well reflected at national level advocacy to our governments and the EU Delegations in our respective countries. We reiterate that that effective development cooperation necessitates full respect to mutual accountability, as an expression of the shared responsibility facing developmental challenges. This entails not only the governments, but also international actors (donors, INGOs and IFIs), the private sector, and the civil society.

**List of Signatories:**

	Name and surname	Organization	Country
1	Alaa Abdeltawab	Egyptian Center for Economic and Social Rights	Egypt
2	Manar Zeaiter	Lawyer and Human Rights Trainer	Lebanon
3	Zahra Bazzi	Arab NGO Network for Development	Lebanon
4	Bihter Moschini	Arab NGO Network for Development	Lebanon
5	Ahmed El Dirani	Al-Midan for Researches and Development	Lebanon
6	Dr. Mohammed Said Saadi	Institut Supérieur de Commerce et d'Administration des Entreprises (State Business School)	Morocco
7	Abdelhakim Chafai	Espace Associative	Morocco
8	Doaa Khanafsa	Palestinian NGO Network	Palestine
9	Samir Aita	General Manager of A CONCEPT, President of the Cercle des Economistes arabes and Editor in Chief and General Manager of Le Monde diplomatique éditions arabes	Syria