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Arab NGO Network for Development
شبكة المنظمات العربية غير الحكومية للتنمية

On the edge of a new Neighborhood Policy:

Rebuilding Relations with Southern Neighborhood countries

**Policy position by Arab CSOs
during the advocacy week to
European Institutions**



November 2015



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The revision of the relations with the neighborhood countries “towards a new European Neighborhood Policy”, identified as a priority by the European Union, is actually a genuine need given the lack of prosperity, development and peace in the region; the very objective of the ENP itself.

The region faces an alarming situation with different types and levels of conflicts. From 4.3 million refugees of Syria more than 2.9 million are hosted in the region, placing unprecedented pressure on the host communities. Inequalities at all levels are widened and deepened; over the decade, the ratio between average expenditure of the ‘rich’ and other consumption based population classes have increased significantly in all countries. The need for enhancing productive sectors that generate sustainable job growth is more apparent than ever, with current youth unemployment levels standing at 29.8% and around 46% female unemployment rate in the region and additional jobs needed estimated at 94 million by 2030 (about 5million annually).

While it was back in late 2010 that the Arab Spring signaled the need to address these deep-rooted socio-economic problems and for rethinking policy priorities in the region, the EU response in 2011 was based on the ‘more for more’ principle, under which increased support in terms of financial assistance, enhanced mobility, and access to the EU Single Market (so-called 3M's - Money, Mobility, Markets) were made available. However these measures could not address the root causes of the uprisings but became a mere continuation of EU policy approach that triggered inequalities underlying these uprisings and the challenges faced both by EU and partner countries.

At the forefront of these challenges comes the **economic and the financial crisis**. Since the start of the crisis, EU repacked neoliberal economic policies as the way out of the crisis, proposed Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade agreements to the neighboring countries, promoted European investments in infrastructure and energy sectors, centralized the role of private sector in development and promoted the public-private partnerships as a key tool in EU external policy, particularly to ensure internationalization of European SMEs and their engagement in the third countries through dismantling of barriers for EU companies. This business as usual approach simply lack the adoption of a comprehensive and rights-based approach to

growth, reducing the role of welfare states in ensuring the full enjoyment of citizens' rights and reproduce the very problematic of the crisis itself as in a vicious circle.

The second challenge in the evolving European and Neighborhood relations is the **migration crisis**. The region, home to multiple crisis and humanitarian emergencies hosts huge number of refugees and IDPs. While the High Representative Vice President Mogherini considers migration crisis as a security crisis¹, the EU member states felt threatened by the flow of refugees at political, economic, social and cultural levels. Accordingly the EU works around increasing border security measures, relocating only a limited number of refugees, increasing cooperation with the countries of origin and transit through allocating additional funds, installing the European Migration Liaison Officers (to be deployed by the end of 2015) including to Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia and Jordan and concluding that 'increased return rates should act as a deterrent to irregular migration'. There is a need to detach development aid from migration policies in a way that this aid is not used to hinder the mobility right of the people. The security approach to migration crisis does not provide a consistent solution with international standards of human rights. It does not try to find a solution of the crisis and thus it doesn't derive from any share of responsibility and accountability in ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

Furthermore while the **shrinking space** for civil society is a long ago well-recognized challenge at the Southern Neighborhood, but became recently a commonly raised as a worldwide concern. The EU does not admit that the implementation of structural adjustment policies based on austerity measures to face crisis endangers social justice. This also results in allocation of financial resources and development aid mainly to boost trade and investment at the forefront, with a decreasing support for advocacy groups and civil society who can actively participate for democratic, social and economic changes towards sustainable development. Considering civil society key role, but mainly in providing response to humanitarian emergencies of the refugees and allocating further aid to them deepens this shrinking space and does not ensure an enabling environment. Furthermore, the diminishing role for civil society reflects the change in the paradigm where the civil society is not perceived anymore as an important development partner but basically private sector is. Accordingly and increasing role is given to enhancing public-private-partnerships and supporting SMEs.

¹ http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2015/150511_03_en.htm

² Read more at <http://www.annd.org/english/itemId.php?itemId=337>

³ de-pollution of the Mediterranean, Maritime and land highways, Civil protection , Alternative energies:

In this background involving civil society in the new Neighborhood Policy design process with a consultation launched on March 2015 was welcomed but would be only a limited effort unless the concerns raised by civil society groups, from both shores of the Mediterranean are taken into account and addressed within the new policy. In addition, and given the adoption of the new Sustainable Development Goals within Agenda 2030 framework, there is a significant role that the EU would play, with its legal obligation and commitment to eradication of poverty as put forward by the Lisbon Treaty Article 208. This should be complemented with ensuring policy coherence for development and accountability for the policies implemented in third countries (i.e. trade, migration...etc.).

On the edge of the launch of the new Neighborhood Policy and with the launch of the new EU trade and investment strategy, new European Agenda on Migration, a new framework for Energy Union, the adoption of the 2015-2019 EU Action plan on human rights and democracy and following our third regional dialogue meeting on EU-Arab partnership², as civil society groups from the Arab region we recall our key messages:

1. No prosperity without social justice, equality and a new development paradigm

The Lisbon Treaty, in its Article 8 brought a legal obligation for EU with regard to establishing an area of prosperity. Yet, for long, ENP implementation focused on numeric figures of GDP growth monitoring the economic reforms neglecting the fact that mere economic growth does not resolve the causes of inequalities. Moreover, economic reforms were based on the Washington consensus that have failed and simply reproduce inequalities in the Arab region, together with increased poverty, unemployment and informalities. **Accordingly, the focus of the new ENP framework should adopt a comprehensive approach to growth; one that is rights based and sustainable, job generating, inclusive and re-distributive. It should support productive capacities and aim at addressing inequalities at various levels: geographical, racial and ethnic, religious, age and gender-based, all of which constitute important obstacles to development. It should foster a new development model prioritizing the diversification of production and the establishment of productive capacities in partner countries.** EU investments in the region, the support to SMEs, enhancing PPP and the allocation of resources through EU financial institutions should be coherent with the development needs of the partners and respect the policy space. It should respect human rights and environmental standards in the partner countries. Moreover, the new ENP should contribute to **achieving a human-rights based approach to**

² Read more at <http://www.annd.org/english/itemId.php?itemId=337>

social protection and universal coverage to all people by appropriate and effective social protection mechanisms, starting from the National Floors of Social Protection. (PWD)

2. No stability without peace and enhanced regional integration

Conflicts among nations and within nations have long prevented the peoples of the region from using their own potential and resources for development. Allocation of resources to security and militarization has been always high. “Security” concerns dominated the national agendas resulting in neglecting the socio-economic development needs and implementation of policies that restricts freedom of expression, opinion and assembly. Thus, **the new ENP framework should acknowledge that peace is a prerequisite for development in the Arab region. It should not limit its approach to only “secure the EU’s border and to ensure EU citizen’s security”. For this approach showed to be inefficient in preserving security and stability. The ENP should adopt a broader vision of peace covering sustainable development, addressing inequalities and ensuring the full enjoyment of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to self-determination and freedom from apartheid and all forms of occupation and discrimination. The new framework should also broaden its approach to include peace and security as human rights.**

On the other hand, regional integration and cooperation is key for enhancing peace and development for the Southern partners. The Union for the Mediterranean framework based on the promotion of regional cooperation projects on selected priority areas³ remains limited even in its technocratic and economic dimensions, without consideration of human rights and democracy. **The new ENP framework should consider that invigorating Arab-European relations will happen through the activation of the regional political dialogue tackling the challenges faced and the nature of relations between the two sides.**

3. No mutual accountability no genuine partnership

ENP did not initiate with a strong equal partners notion. On the contrary **the policy has been Euro-centric undermining the periphery, marginalizing national ownership and true reflection on partner countries’ needs and necessities.** The Arab countries were separated between the rich in the Gulf and those populated on the Mediterranean; and no scheme was formulated for regional integration and

³ de-pollution of the Mediterranean, Maritime and land highways, Civil protection , Alternative energies: Mediterranean solar plan, Higher education and research, Euro-Mediterranean University and the Mediterranean Business Initiative



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cooperation. The Action Plans and programming documents reflected this process and were similarly built on a Euro-centric approach. Consequently, EU policy propositions and initiatives have been overwhelmingly protective of EU interests over that of its partners **particularly when faced with a crisis situation (i.e. economic crisis, migration crisis in the Mediterranean, the “Arab spring” and its consequences)**. Moreover the partnership was further challenged for its weak **inclusiveness and transparency in policy-making process**. Behind-doors dialogue with national governments resulted in Action Plans without real and comprehensive national ownership or a reflection of the real needs and necessities of all levels of society. Short, medium and long-term **reforms were monitored without clear benchmarks and indicators; and accountability was sought unilaterally from partner countries to the EU**. Indeed, ensuring accountability and transparency in the implementation of the ENP is key for its success and the mutual accountability principle brought with the 2011 ENP is important for the “partnership” established between EU and Arab countries. In its emphasis on the mutual accountability, the EU should ensure primarily “transparency” in policy formulation and engage all relevant stakeholders including independent civil society, trade unions and media in different policy processes and particularly trade, investment and migration policies. There is a need to institutionalize periodic and participatory evaluation process of the ENP in order to ensure that it is responding to the needs and aspirations of both partners.

4. No civil society no reflection of genuine needs of the partners

The EU recognizes the essential role of civil society and has created initiatives and additional funding to further enhance their role. Yet, the EU emphasis remains on the “watch-function” and “ensuring better public accountability” role of civil society. Resources allocated under initiatives like Civil Society Facility Technical Assistance focus primarily on “capacity-building” exercises rated solely to training, rather than admitting that civil society in the region needs to be empowered for a better engagement in policy-change through structured dialogue mechanisms. **Accordingly, the new ENP should establish a genuine partnership with civil society, recognizing their role and responding to the aspirations of the people of the region. It should enable direct dialogue with EU officials at European External Action Service, European Commission and EU Delegations. Inclusive and transparent dialogue with civil society at sub-national, national and regional levels should tackle all areas including trade policies and peace processes.**

It should build on civil society “ownership” of the dialogue so that they can highlight priorities and define agendas. This would necessitate engaging civil society in all policy making levels, including programming, implementation, monitoring and

evaluation and engaging diverse groups including independent trade unions, business associations, environmental organizations, social movements, independent local development agencies, academia, think tanks and youth organizations among others. In addition, the initiatives under the new ENP should contribute to the enabling environment and to building institutional capacities ensuring their access to all kind of information and to resources.

5. No human rights-based framework no sustainability of the ENP

The ENP aimed to achieve a sustainable and long-term partnership with EU's neighbors. Yet 10 years of implementation resulted in alerting outcomes and recognition of failures. While the revision of the policy towards moving away from one size fits all approach to differentiation, more flexibility, more ownership is vital one should admit that the overall review/revision of the policy framework, its key principles and approach would simply be unsustainable if every two-three years a similar process is launched. **A key step to ensure sustainability of the ENP lays on ensuring the adoption of a human rights framework and ENP to be a vital tool to promote universal values, democracy and rule of law.**

This requires ENP framework to enhance policy coherence for development with its implementation and to be consistent with the new EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for 2015-2019 as well. Accordingly the EU should undertake ex-ante and ex-post impact assessments of its policy implications; trade, investment, energy policies should be designed, implemented and revised based on the outcomes of these assessments. The ENP implementation should ensure the implementation of and the mutual compliance with the obligations stemming from core international human rights treaties including International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as ILO conventions. Given EU promotion of **more active engagement of the private sector in development cooperation, a clear mandate for private sector role should be put forward, namely enhancing productivity** and competitiveness in partner countries as well as **the improvement of productive sectors** with added-value production. **European member states' duty in protecting human rights through proper oversight and regulation of private actors should be enhanced and the EU is called to play a key role in the adoption of an internationally binding framework for the private sector to ensure transparency and its respect for human rights and social justice.**

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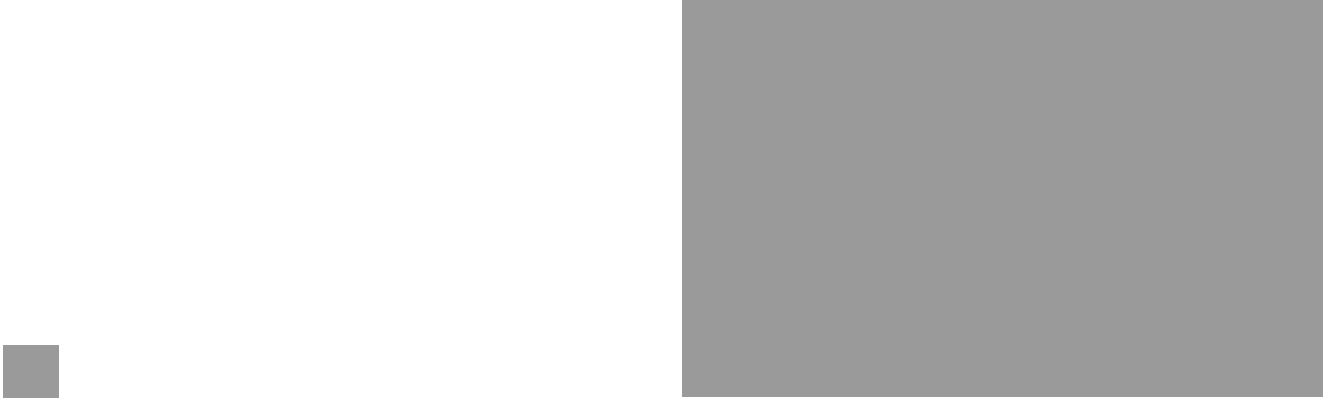
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The Arab NGOs Network for Development is an independent, democratic, and civic organization that aims at strengthening civil society and enhancing the values of democracy and respect of Human Rights and sustainable development in the Arab region. It works towards its aim through programs of advocacy and lobbying on regional and national policy-making in three main areas; development, trade, and democracy, while being committed to the international convention on Human Rights, freedom, respect of the individual, respect of diversity, equality of resource division, and the protection of cultural heritage in the Region and the implementing the developmental priorities of the local societies.