

DECLARATION

SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR DEMOCRACY AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

At the beginning of the Arab revolutions, people took to the streets to call not only for freedom and justice but also for dignity and jobs. To build a genuinely democratic system, efficient democratic institutions are needed which enable the empowerment of citizens, promote effective citizenship and guarantee human and social rights for all.

Social inclusion is a prerequisite for democracy. Social inclusion ensures the building of fair, transparent and stable democracies. This means guaranteeing for everyone, including women and young people as well as minorities and marginalised groups, full and effective citizenship. Unfortunately, many people are suffering from a lack of participation and future perspectives, which impedes their social and economic empowerment and independence and hinders social and economic development. Targeted approaches have to be developed that eradicate poverty, ensure social inclusion and include providing basic healthcare, quality education, decent work and social protection for all. A modern welfare state, social justice and democracy go hand in hand. Their foundations need to be secured in constitutions and legislation.

Access to quality healthcare, education and social protection for everyone. Essential services are fundamental rights of citizens regardless of their socio-economic status and are key for turning the unemployed into a competitive workforce in order to be able to attract business and boost growth. Social protection means promoting both inclusion and productivity by ensuring that people enjoy decent working conditions that allow adequate free time and rest, take into account family and social values, provide for adequate compensation in case of lost or reduced income and permit access to adequate healthcare.

Promote inclusive economic growth on the basis of social justice. The Arab world has a huge asset: a young and dynamic population. Current high unemployment figures hide the great human capital potential for the region. This also indicates that the region faces a huge economic challenge, namely to ensure economic growth, boosting domestic demand and job creating decent work and quality jobs. Women's empowerment is vital to sustainable development and growth. Women are a crucial asset for our societies and economies.

Job creation must be a priority. An economy that generates opportunities for investment and entrepreneurship is needed. This means opening up greater access to economic opportunities for everyone through democratic, stable, accountable and transparent institutions as well as good governance. An economy that promotes skills development, job creation and sustainable livelihoods has to be strengthened through active labour market policies. Furthermore, targeted public investments, infrastructure development and empowered public and social services, taking into consideration regional disparities, are needed.

Job creation must be followed by rising salaries and redistributive policies. Only such measures can boost domestic demand and stabilize economies in the region on the long term. If job creation is not accompanied by a tangible improvement in the quality of life, human development and poverty reduction, it will fail to deliver on its promises; structural economic problems will remain and social unrest will come back and undermine the democratisation process.

Mutually strengthening trade agreements with the EU. Trade is a key factor for economic and social development. The successful use of trade and investments can boost a country's development. In order for trade policies to be effective and to constitute a driver for social and economic development in the region, it is crucial that accountability and transparency, government effectiveness, the rule of law and human rights are successfully promoted. Active labour policies need to be strengthened to help narrow income inequalities

through inclusive labour markets, encourage employment stability and promote fair mechanisms for wage determination that raise living standards for all. The European Union is currently negotiating a number of trade agreements with its Southern Mediterranean partners. They must be fair and balanced and promote measures that stimulate the economies of Southern partners in a sustainable way in order to attain a genuine win-win situation. Aggressive policies of market opening could have disastrous consequences on Southern Mediterranean neighbors. Trade must contribute to the creation of an area of shared prosperity based on sustainable and balanced economic and social development.

A strong support by the European Union The European Union has a fundamental role to play in the current process of transformation in the region. The EU must reinforce further its support for freedom, dignity, democracy, political capacity and pluralism, the cementing of democracy and its institutions, social justice and the social and economic betterment of the people of the region. The EU must do so by emphasizing the role of political pluralism, trade unions and civil society as well as the need to ensure a participatory and inclusive approach to decision-making with regard to national dialogue and reform. The countries' economies need to be sustained as financial need may endanger the democratic process altogether. Building a new relation between the EU and its neighbors, based on fundamental principles of joint ownership and mutual accountability, must be the focus of a new vision for Euro-Arab and Euro-Mediterranean partnerships. Progressive forces and movements across the Mediterranean must continue their efforts to define a new approach to a real, equal and genuine partnership, one that acknowledges that there is no single template for success and where both sides, in a spirit of reciprocity, simply offer their experience and assistance for progress and fairer societies.

By expressing their demands for jobs and dignity in the streets, the people of the Arab revolutions have pledged their determination and readiness to take up these challenges. It is now up to progressive movements to turn these demands into reality and together helping achieve these goals through social and civil dialogue in full respect of the freedom of association. The EU should reinforce its support to freedom, social justice, dignity and jobs. SOLIDAR, the Global Network and the Global Progressive Forum, are committed to continue their work and further develop initiatives to support these goals.

Progressive leaders of political forces, trade unions, civil society, youth movements, human rights activists, progressive academics and social protest movements must join forces to promote these common progressive policies and to achieve the core goals of democracy, social justice and inclusive growth.