



PES Conference
“Arab revolutions: time for democracy, freedom and progress!”
28-29 April 2011, Tunis

Declaration

All participants to the **PES Conference “Arab revolutions: time for democracy and progress!”** in Tunis are motivated by the events which have come to be known as the Arab Spring. We welcome the spirit of hope and dignity that forms the bedrock of this movement and we honour the many sacrifices that its participants have made. **It is to them that these revolutions belong, to them that our congratulations are addressed, especially to the young people who have taken the lead in these movements.** The events unfolding and embracing a wide region stretching from the western shores of the Mediterranean to the eastern shores of the Middle East and the southern sea of the Arabian Peninsula are unprecedented in magnitude and implications. **The demands to bring about democratic change and fairness for the generations have come to represent a turning point in the region. For too long too many Europeans have underestimated these aspirations of democracy and social progress and given priority to stability before democracy.**

Tunisia and Egypt are advancing along the path to democratic transition. These two countries are exemplars for the region yet there is a need to be extremely vigilant. **It is of utmost importance that they are a success which illustrates the viability and stability of democracy.** We will follow in depth Tunisia’s legislative elections, scheduled for July 2011, as well as Egypt’s elections, currently foreseen in September 2011.

Throughout the region, additional efforts are necessary to guarantee a veritable and effective transition towards a modern pluralistic democracy. We strongly emphasise the role of women in the process of democratic reform and societal progress and support all efforts to to achieve gender equality in all spheres of public and private life. Capacity building for good governance, rule of law and human rights must be fostered. People around the region are ready to have a better life and better living conditions, not for the few but for all the people.

It is vital for progressives to engage actively in the period prior to democratic elections. **We must ensure transparent and credible foundations in terms of institutions, law on political organizations, the financing of political parties and constitutional safeguards.** Opposition political forces, trade unions and civil society have an essential role to play in this regard for a genuinely participatory and inclusive transition process. **No strong democracy is possible without strong political parties.** We encourage the socialist and social democratic movements to cooperate very closely for the upcoming elections as divisions may seriously jeopardise electoral success. Unity for progressives is the answer. We strongly reject any assumptions regarding the incompatibility of democracy and Islamic traditions, and instead have full confidence in the renewed commitment to democratic traditions in the region.

The participants of this conference unequivocally condemn the actions of the Gaddafi regime in Libya, which has lost its legitimacy, and call on this obsolete regime to cease hostilities immediately and hand over power. Perpetrators of crimes against humanity will be brought to



justice according to international law before the International Criminal Court. All necessary measures to protect and support those in need must be taken.

The participants of this conference call on the Syrian regime to put an end to violence against protesters and civilians. The Yemeni regime must stop the brutal use of force by authorities to suppress legitimate democratic demands. Authorities must respect the freedom of expression and assembly and release political representatives and activists currently under detention. To this end, **we call for the end to the dictatorships and a swift transition to democracy.**

The participants of this conference note that in **Morocco and Jordan** the extent and depth of reforms to improve living standards remains at this time unclear. **A modern political system of checks and balances must be put in place.** In Morocco the political opening achieved thanks to the actions of the Left in the 1990s jammed without thus translating into tangible institutional progress. We shall monitor very closely the process of constitutional reform in Morocco which started in March 2011. **Algeria** should also start a real process of reforms to face with the urgent needs of young people of the country.

The participants of this conference regret that in **Bahrain**, notwithstanding prolonged protests no veritable step has been made by the authorities. We are deeply concerned about the upcoming local elections in **Saudi Arabia**, planned for September 2011, which does not foresee the right to vote for women. In the rest of the Gulf States and other countries from the wider region, **the Arab Spring has not led to any political progress. We believe nevertheless that status quo is simply no longer sustainable.**

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which has for a long time closed any perspective to the development of Euro-Mediterranean relations, deserves now a kick start in the light of the democratic transformations in the Arab world. The European socialists demand a stronger engagement on the part of the EU for a fair solution which is global and respects the values of freedom, tolerance and democracy. We support the Palestinian reconciliation agreement and call for the recognition of the unity government. The participants underline the importance of the recognition of a Palestinian state, within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as capital, as well as the total freeze of settlements for a new start in the peace process respecting the two-state solution; Israel-Palestine.

We condemn the repression in Iran, welcome the emergence of democracy movements in the country and call for the liberation of opposition leaders including Moussavi, Karoubi and all political prisoners.

A true new Euro-Arab partnership and a new Euro-Mediterranean partnership

Europe made mistakes in the past. It is time to start on a new basis, part of a wider framework matching the magnitude of change, a **Euro-Mediterranean partnership, on equal footing.** Confronted with the failures of the Union for the Mediterranean and the difficulties of the last phase of the , Barcelona Process, **it is necessary for the EU to open an in-depth discussion** on ways to accompany in the short term the transition to democracy, to foster political capacity and pluralism, the cementing of democracy and its institutions. It is also the role of the EU to contribute to the social and economic betterment of the people of the region.

The European Union, as a regional force, has a fundamental role to play. The EU must take all necessary steps to **implement an Emergency Programme** to support, where applicable, the countries'. **The EU must seize this historical opportunity and offer assistance in different forms to all emerging democratic movements.** The EU can contribute positively in a number of areas including regional development, investment plans in the poorest regions, civil society promotion, media expansion and support to the justice system and the rule of law. The opening of European markets especially in favour of agricultural products must be ensured swiftly. The EU must support the active engagement of young people as they will increasingly shape the future of the region. There



is no stronger and more sustainable stability and security than that provided by a truly democratic system and its institutions.

Association Agreements and Advanced Status negotiations are at the very core of relations between the EU and countries from the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Advancement should be granted to countries which have made progress on institutional and democratic reform. **Specific visa regimes and free mobility, conditional to progress in key democracy areas, have always constituted an essential pillar of the Union's policies.** They should be promoted in the context of a **new Euro-Mediterranean partnership**. Particular efforts should be devoted to visa regimes for students and scholarships.

Europe must also engage in a new Euro-Arab partnership in the context of a follow up of these major events.

Action plan and recommendations

The Party of European Socialists has a fundamental role to play vis-à-vis the EU's action in the region. And in line with its previous commitments and statements therefore adopts the following Action Plan, together with the conference's participants:

- 1) Maximise the impact of progressive policies for the region through the EU institutions, and in its bilateral relations, by coordinating actions and initiatives with the S&D Group in the European Parliament, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies, the Global Progressive Forum, the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity and national progressive foundations;
- 2) Provide support for party-building and political capacity by means of trainings and recruitment in close cooperation with the region's progressive parties;
- 3) Assist, where requested, in facilitating the upcoming elections with input on campaign programmes and political strategies;
- 4) Help the EU identify new strategies to manage migration flows caused by the exceptional situation in most of the countries of the south coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Advocate for a common approach, in a spirit of solidarity, respecting fundamental rights and international agreements and making use of all existing instruments at the EU's disposal;
- 5) Establish a Task Force composed of Parties and Foundations; Create a Network bringing together relevant actors from both sides of the Mediterranean.

True Freedom, true democracy and true sustainable progress

All democratic forces and movements have a unique responsibility since the recent events in the Mediterranean and Middle East beyond political colours and differences. The progressive and secular family on both sides of the Mediterranean is committed to laying the foundations for a common network of progressive political forces, personalities and individuals. Our shared aim is the promotion of our universal values of freedom, peace, social justice, gender equality, rule of law, the abolition of capital punishment throughout the region and the respect of human rights standards..

Our common aim is to help build up a new future for the people of the Arab spring. Democracy, yes; freedom, yes; justice; yes, but it must be accompanied by a new social and economic progress for all the people and not just for the few.

The PES and all progressives of Europe are ready to assist and cooperate with all progressive parties, trade unions and NGOs of the region in the years ahead. A new initiative by the PES to follow up on this action plan and the commitments here made by the participants of this conference will be organised in spring 2012.

