



ESCWA

Report
of the High-Level Meeting on
**REFORM & TRANSITIONS
TO DEMOCRACY**

Beirut, 15-16 January 2012

Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

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SUMMARY

Over the past year, many Arab countries have witnessed popular uprisings in which ordinary men and women have demanded freedom, social justice and dignity. Some leaders have been ousted from power, others have promised meaningful reforms that would put their countries on a path to democratic governance, while others still have responded with force in an attempt to quell all signs of protest.

Though dramatic protests have taken many by surprise, the causes of discontent are glaringly obvious. A number of countries in the region are grappling with a long legacy of autocratic rule and entrenched development challenges that have accumulated over at least half a century. These include, but are not limited to one party rule, presidential monarchies, gross violations of human rights, the lack of rule of law, the suppression of civil liberties and freedoms and rising socio-economic inequality.

Today, these uprisings have placed most countries of the region on a path of reform and transition to democracy that is fraught with difficulty and considerable short-, medium- and long-term challenges. The experience of countries in Latin America, Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia that have undergone similar transformative events has shown that the outcomes of popular uprisings are dependent on a mix of predictable and unpredictable variables. To engage with some of these challenges a High-Level Meeting on Reform and Transitions to Democracy was jointly organized by the five regional commissions in Beirut, 15-16 January 2012. The aim of this meeting was to provide a forum for decision makers in emerging democracies in Arab countries to exchange views and experience with other leaders who have encountered similar challenges. It sought to examine the different experiences of transition and the lessons of value to the region, including alternate ways to manage short- to medium-term expectations, factors that affect national consensus-building and the role of military and civilian authorities and the international community in the process. Examples of inclusive policies, transitional justice mechanisms and the potential challenges to effective institution building were also explored.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Arab region stands at the most critical juncture of its modern history. Waves of uprisings have reasserted that Arab citizens have a say in governance and are the source of the legitimacy of the bodies that govern them. These events present a large number of challenges in the short, medium and long term which have been faced by other countries that have undergone similar transitions.
2. With this in mind, the High-Level Meeting on Reform and Transitions to Democracy was organized jointly by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and all United Nations regional commissions, namely the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). It was held on 15 and 16 January 2012, in Beirut. The meeting was opened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.
3. The meeting aimed to provide a forum for leaders from the Arab region and other parts of the world to exchange experience and discuss the various challenges they faced during transitions to democracy and the means for overcoming them. Participants shared experiences of different types of transitions and exchanged lessons learned.

I. KEY MESSAGES

4. Although variations in the geography and history of different countries were noted, presentations and discussions of the meeting nevertheless resulted in a number of key messages that are central to a successful transition to democracy. These include:
 - (a) Arab uprisings: The success of Arab uprisings will be assessed by the degree to which Arab people succeed in building democratic structures that protect human rights, promote justice for all and provide fair economic opportunities and social welfare for citizens;
 - (b) Transition to democracy: The transition to democracy is a long, drawn-out and multidimensional process that requires considerable political will to manage short-term expectations whilst building needed national and social consensus around the key pillars that sustain it. Democracy and the integration of human rights into every aspect of governance must go hand in hand with the

equalization of economic opportunities and access to the wealth of the nation;

- (c) **Regional context:** The regional context is important for the success of transitions in economic and political terms. The democratic transition experiences of Europe and Latin America indicate that a favourable regional and international context can go a long way towards providing economic and political support for democratic transition in any country. Unfavourable conditions also play a crucial role in undermining such transitions and maintaining totalitarian regimes;
- (d) **Occupation:** One key to the Arab Spring is justice for Palestine, which continues to suffer from the longest occupation in modern history. Democratic transition cannot be completed while the Palestinians remain under occupation and continue to be deprived of their basic rights. Ousted leaders in the region lost their credibility due in part to their inability to take an effective stance against injustices that were being committed and because they used Palestine as an excuse to maintain autocratic regimes at home. The aspirations of Arab citizens for dignity, freedom and justice cannot be realized without recognizing the right of the Palestinian people to an independent State, a right that ought to be enjoyed by all the people of the world;
- (e) **Civilian military authority:** Maintaining civilian oversight of the military is an essential pillar of democratic governance. Unlike military authorities, civilian authorities are elected and can therefore be held accountable to their constituents. To ensure a solid relationship based on mutual understanding it is important to train civilian authorities in military affairs;
- (f) **Justice and equity:** Democratic transition is impossible without justice. While social change often lags behind political transition, justice can only be achieved if there are clear and transparent mechanisms of governance that level the playing field and give citizens fair access to economic opportunity;
- (g) **Transitional justice:** Despite its importance, there is no blueprint for transitional justice. The instruments of transitional justice are context-specific, determined by the need to bolster national unity while addressing the atrocities of the past. Such instruments include, among others, blanket amnesty to avoid divisions, truth and reconciliation commissions or commissions for the disappeared. Even though the process of transitional justice may take place in different stages over a period of 20-30 years, the most effective instruments promote a forward-looking agenda that can affect fundamental societal change while correcting past injustices;

- (h) New social/civic contract: States must transition from considering citizens a threat to security to recognizing them as the fundamental basis of State legitimacy. To this end, constitutional reforms must focus on rethinking the relationship between the State and citizens and focus on building a people-centred State based on inclusive economies and social justice;
- (i) Youth and civil society: The large and youthful population of the Arab region, along with labour unions, syndicates and various civil society organizations were at the forefront of the demonstrations. Their inclusion in the reform process and the transition to democracy is paramount to the success of this transition. The greater the participation of civil society and of communities, the stronger the democratic institutions will be;
- (j) Women: No democracy is complete without the full political, economic and social rights of women. While women in the Arab region were full participants in the uprisings, they have been marginalized in the immediate aftermath. The participation of women in the transitional period should not be limited to elections and parliaments but should include all sectors, particularly the judiciary. Moreover, the rights of women should be provided for in new constitutions on the basis of the fundamental principles of human rights that guarantee equal rights to dignity, justice and freedom to all citizens regardless of gender, race or creed;
- (k) Religion and the State: Two principle view points were put forward on the relationship between religion and State institutions. One view point held religion as the basic moral and intellectual reference of any political project, although it need not define the shape of the State. A second view point asserted that basing the laws of a State on religious principles generates far more religious and communal tension and strife than laws based on universal human rights. Laws based on religion also have a considerable impact on the rights of different population, religious and ethnic groups. Intimately connecting the State and religion means that religious principles dictate family laws which in turn undermine the rights of women as equal citizens of any given State.

II. OUTCOMES

- 5. As a direct outcome of this meeting, three key follow-up activities have been identified:
 - (a) A follow-up high-level meeting on the social and economic challenges of the transition to democracy will be organized in the second half of 2012 by the five regional commissions;

- (b) A flagship publication on *Transition to Democracy* is being considered. A concept note for the publication has already been prepared and a number of background papers have been commissioned;
- (c) Policy briefs on a number of the key messages listed above will be produced.

III. DISCUSSION TOPICS

- 6. The meeting was organized in sessions under two main themes. The first was on transition from autocracy to democracy; the second was on pre-empting civil strife and a return to autocracy.

Theme I – Transition from Autocracy to Democracy

- 7. Under this theme, discussions focused on two main topics, namely: strengthening democratic institutions as a means for building inclusive and egalitarian societies; and growth, social justice, and the role of State and non-State institutions.

A. *Strengthening democratic institutions as a means for building inclusive and egalitarian societies*

- 8. The session was moderated by Ms. Alicia Bárcena, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Ms. Bárcena gave a brief overview of the main elements of the topic under the current circumstances in the region. She highlighted the similarities and differences between the experiences of countries with different characteristics in terms of language, culture and social and economic structures. She summarized the conditions to be respected by the State in order to build trust between the regime and the people and stated that when trust is undermined, change is unavoidable. She also stated that the ultimate goal of transitions was achieving rights-based development.

Presentations

- 1. *Addressing the challenges of transition*
- 9. A presentation was made by Mr. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Turkey, who emphasized that change was irreversible. He explained that, new ways forward need to be explored and the paths that could be adopted need to be understood. Five dimensions that need to be taken into consideration were presented:

- (a) Mr. Davutoğlu stated that Arab individuals and ordinary young people initiated the current transformation, rather than radical groups that threaten the international system. They wanted change and demanded freedom, dignity and justice and no one was immune. The real challenge is in respecting the basic demands of populations and accepting the rights of the people. Otherwise the transition will fail. The role of the international community is not to guide but to show solidarity since we all share a common destiny. The success of the movements in question will affect the entire region. The process may be long and challenging but it is promising. It is crucial to trust the choices of the people;
- (b) Mr. Davutoğlu stated that a transformation of mentalities must come before a transformation of institutions. People will have to be consistent in their values in order to lead the transformation. The main values of the transformation include freedom, human rights, women’s rights, freedom of expression and association. It is, therefore, crucial to avoid double standards and to adopt these values as sources of legitimacy which are central and form the main link between the State and the people. Respect for those values is required in order to create a free and true democracy through transparent and fair elections;
 - (i) In the past, the survival of the State was thought to be dependent on secrecy and security. The new philosophy now tends towards preserving the balance between freedom and security. If freedom is sacrificed for security the result is autocracy. If security is sacrificed for the sake of freedom the result is chaos. In the case of Arab States, the long Israeli occupation has led Arab countries to opt for strong States and strong armies, but what they needed were stronger citizens. The balance between freedom and security constitutes the basis of legitimacy;
 - (ii) In order to survive, autocracies need to create a threat, whether internal or external. Citizens are not a threat. Rather they should be considered an asset. Therefore, it is essential to trust people and strengthen the voluntary bond between the State and the society so that the citizens become the basis of a strong State. To this end, constitutional reforms must focus on human rights to build a people-based State;
- (c) Constitutional reform is essential and should reflect new values. The Constitution needs to be based on the individual and not the State. In addition, all institutions, including the army, must be under civilian control to ensure accountability. People need continuity and State institutions should be able to continue even if the regime and the administration change;

This transition is a normalization of history... We all share a common destiny...When we say “we” we mean Arab and Turkey

The most legitimate State is one which says to its citizens: “I will give freedom without jeopardizing your security and I will give you security without limiting your freedom”

...the long Israeli occupation has led Arab countries to opt for strong States and strong armies, whereas what they needed were stronger citizens

- Progress in this direction requires a change in the educational system as a prerequisite for changing mentalities. Change should be based on common universal values which are valid over time and across all borders even though specific characteristics may vary. The countries of the region share a common destiny and the success of one country contributes to the success of the region;
 - (d) Because the region currently lacked success stories, it is very important to support Tunisia in its transition process. A new region is emerging with historical diversity and multiculturalism. However, danger lies in the potential emergence of a new form of polarization, and consolidated efforts will be required to prevent the emergence of cold war logic;
 - The region needs a new vision where borders do not separate nations but rather constitute cultural and economic openings;
 - (e) Attempts by the international community to control or guide the processes may spoil the transition. There is a need to respect the region and avoid double standards. Since the transition is happening in the midst of an economic crisis, rich countries of the region have particular responsibilities. Countries need to work together on a broad and comprehensive economic programme aimed at developing infrastructure and services to maximize benefits and minimize weaknesses.
10. He concluded by stating that preserving regional ownership, respect for the people and for the individual would maximize the chances for one of the most successful transitions in history, and that making this happen was the ethical responsibility of all.

2. The military and civilian authorities

11. A presentation was made by Mr. Juan Gabriel Valdes, Former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Chile, former Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York and former Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Haiti.
12. Mr. Valdes stated that while there were many differences between transitions in Latin America and Arab countries there were also quite a few lessons to be learned. He presented the experience of Chile, a country that carried out a highly institutional transition from a totalitarian to a democratic regime. This transition began with a plebiscite in 1988 in which General Pinochet lost. However, despite the results, the plebiscite showed that the military enjoyed enormous support (44 per cent of the vote). A number of factors reduced the likelihood of successful transition to democracy, including the

Chile's past culture of maintaining civilian control of the armed forces as well as the change in international culture played a significant role in the transition to democracy

*With time,
democracy
became not the
best choice but
the only choice
for Chile*

right of the president to remain for eight years as the commander in chief of the army and the wide acceptance of the complex legal system set up by the military to protect their privileges, guarantee their autonomy and preserve the authoritarian legacy. Because a confrontation with the military was out of the question, change could only take place from within the system. In the absence of agreements on how to stop or address human rights violations and to ensure the return of the military to the barracks, leaders of the transitional period focused on negotiations and building consensus on key issues including needed socio-economic reforms to achieve recovery and social justice. To establish an atmosphere of trust between the different segments of Chilean society, a far reaching dialogue was initiated that included non-governmental organizations, Government and military institutions, the president, parliament and members of civil society. Civilian authorities led the reformation, modernization and progressive professionalization of the military corps. This process also included the specialization of civilians in military affairs. The declared amnesty laws prevented the courts from addressing past violations of human rights, so a committee of truth and reconciliation was established. It contributed to raising awareness about the crimes committed under dictatorship and focused on those that had disappeared during that period.

13. There were several factors that contributed to the success of democratic change in Chile. These included the strong political-civil coalition that won the plebiscite and put forward a vision for the country during its seventeen years of struggle. A second factor was the considerable transformation in the international cultural and historical context of that period. The end of the cold war had rendered military interventions a thing of the past. In addition, Chile's previous experience with democratic governance (the pre-Pinochet era) particularly the subordination of the army to civilian control was still within living memory. Yet at the moment of the transition, no one would have expected that 16 years later the military would be totally subordinated to civilian authority and that officers of the armed forces would be held accountable for human rights violations. The progressive professionalization of the army was a critical part of this process.
14. Mr. Valdes closed his presentation by stating that the democratic transition was the fruit of discipline, perseverance, patience and the importance of giving time for the evolution of the political process. Democracy became not the best choice but the only choice for Chile.

Instability can be the sequel to the destruction of a tyranny but it can also be a motor for change, an opportunity for democracy and human dignity

The failure to establish a separation between political authority and religion is an invitation to strife

3. Reforming the security apparatus

15. A presentation was made by Ms. Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia. Speaking of her country's experience with transition, she mentioned that the process faced major challenges. The country was sacrificed by big powers for the sake of global security. A number of similarities with Arab countries could be identified where despotic regimes were supported by democratic regimes to protect international agreements at the expense of the population. The people in Arab countries, like their counterparts in Eastern Europe have called for democracy and a system of governance where citizens are empowered ahead of both the military and the civilian institutions of the country. What is being demanded is the empowerment of the individual, freedom and equal rights for all citizens.
16. She stated that change, especially political change, is always possible. Illegitimate regimes tend to be stable with a tyrant sitting at the top of a pyramid of supporters who extract excessive benefits from the system at the expense of ordinary citizens. While international tolerance for tyrannies plays a substantial role in keeping autocrats in place, the advantages they confer on those who follow them play an even more significant role. There comes a point, however, when any authoritarian system begins to weaken. To make a change, the armed forces need to be placed under civilian control. Furthermore, armed forces should be considered as a tool in the hands of civil Governments to maintain the security of the nation and its territorial integrity.
17. Ms. Vīķe-Freiberga asserted that the relationship between individuals and God was a private matter of individual conscience and that no intermediary had the right to impose his authority in the name of God. Freedom of religion is an essential right and thus there is a need to separate religion and State in a democracy. She warned that the failure to establish such a separation between political authority and religion is an invitation to strife. She indicated that the centuries of conflict and religious wars in Europe prove the harm that a lack of such a separation can cause. She advised transitional democracies to establish a new social contract. Any argument that people and nations need some form of guided democracy is an underestimation of the capacity of people for self government. She closed by stating that even though democracy is not a perfect system, to date, democracy is considered the best system that has been invented and we must give it a try.

Discussions

18. Participants reaffirmed the importance of democracy and indicated that no further justification of the choice of political system was needed as democracy is already the governing system of choice in several countries of the Arab region. They emphasized the need for real change to address the many problems nations are facing today. There was consensus that new republics need to be built on sound economic, social and political programmes and plans.
19. Two critical issues must be taken into consideration in this context. Since poverty is a main problem in the region, economic cooperation and development are crucial to establish the new order. Therefore, it is necessary to examine new ways of cooperating at both the national and regional levels. The participants were of the view that ESCWA had an important role to play in connecting the countries of the region. Another critical issue in this context is the Arab-Israeli conflict and the resulting collective injustice.
20. It was mentioned that the true cause of crises worldwide is disrespect for human value and the protection of authoritarian regimes by the international community. It is therefore essential to reaffirm human value and ensure the protection of and respect for human rights. People have the right to govern their own lives. Equal opportunities without discrimination, full citizenship and the rule of law are to form the basis of the new governments.
21. Participants pointed out that different countries have different characteristics, political institutions, social conditions and infrastructures. Each country has the right of ownership to its individual process and selected model of transition. There is no single path towards democracy, rather, there are different paths that should be decided in the light of internal and external factors that influence the transition process. In all cases, however, it is crucial to establish a complete separation between military and political authority.
22. It was agreed that establishing democracy would not be the immediate result of the uprisings. Democracy is a process that requires time and unity in diversity. In fact, pluralism and differences in the region are an asset rather than a disadvantage, and should be managed in a complementary approach in which no single party has the right to exclude the other. When positively invested, pluralism can help avoid civil strife and protect democracy. In order to establish and sustain a democracy, national capacities must be enhanced to ensure that

elections are inclusive. It is of primary importance to include women in the political process.

23. Currently, human right activists are focusing on the importance of protecting the positive results of recent revolutions and avoiding the risk of autocratic relapse or civil strife. Revolutions were ignited and led by ordinary citizens with the aim of preserving human value. Therefore, success will not be achieved through a redistribution of power (whether placing it in military or civilian hands) but rather through restructuring the entire political system so that it is centred upon citizens. In this context, civil society should play an essential role in order to prevent a return to despotic practices. Decision-making process should include mechanisms in which all social actors are able to participate.
24. Concerns were raised about external powers attempting to influence and/or control the outcome of transitions to ensure conformity with their political, security and economic interest. However, participants agreed that the Arab people have broken the barrier of fear and their demand for equality and dignity will ensure that transitions will continue towards democratic reform. There was also agreement that the role of the international community was to assist the people of the region to govern their lives by their will without any intervention or double standard. It was also agreed that the exchange of experience and success stories could help countries have a smoother transition process.

B. Growth, social justice and the role of State and non-State institutions

25. The session was moderated by Mr. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Mr. Heyzer said the Arab uprisings occurred because courageous people, especially youth, wanted change and envisioned a future where entrenched interests and the old autocratic order would give way to a new political and economic order rooted in inclusiveness, social justice and dignity. The aspirations of the protesters were to have reforms and transitions to democracy that removed inequalities and humiliations and delivered the benefits of economic, social and political development equally across class, gender, ethnicity, religion and the rural/urban divide. The joint meeting of the regional commissions was a sign of solidarity with these aspirations and a strong will to work together for the human cause. The meeting also aimed to facilitate dialogue and

to share experience and lessons learned in the process of devising a clear vision for the future, one that promotes more inclusive growth, creates jobs and transforms autocratic States into development-oriented States with a new social contract for citizens. In order to achieve these objectives, she stressed the importance of strengthening South-South cooperation, enhancing the role of the private sector and addressing macroeconomic issues within the framework of sustainable development. She also stated that it is essential to make use of the strengths of each country across the different regions and to support the values in which the revolutions were rooted.

Stability, security and economic growth should not be at the expense of democracy, diversity and difference of opinion

Presentations

1. *The challenges of inclusive growth and social justice in transitions*
26. A presentation was made by Mr. Ziad Bahaa el-Din, Member of the newly elected Egyptian Parliament. Mr. Bahaa el-Din stressed the importance of inclusive development and growth as a conduit of democratic transition. He noted the appeal of inclusive growth, particularly in light of the lessons learned from the deficient results of policies that generated quick economic growth while disregarding the ramifications on the environment, social equity and freedom. Inclusive growth can be achieved when economic development is based on the following seven concepts. (1) Continuous and sustainable development is needed to prevent the repercussions of sudden economic shocks or contraction on society, while assuring individuals that the direction and destination are known, even though they are on what might appear to be a long road. Mr. Bahaa el-Din stated that this approach represents a major shift in thinking, emphasizing continuity and consistency as opposed to high growth rates that might not be easily replicated. (2) It is important to establish links between economic and social policies to ensure the fair distribution of resources and protect vulnerable groups. (3) Laws and policies must be amended to combat corruption. He emphasized that it is not enough for society to prosecute corrupt officials if laws and procedures actually encourage corruption. Only by amending such laws will future generations be prevented from relapsing into corrupt practices. (4) The preservation of the environment and natural resources and upholding the right of future generations to them must be part of the national sustainable development vision. (5) Development can only be achieved within the framework of true democracy. The choice of stability, security and economic

The aim was not merely to increase the number of economically and politically active women but rather to provide women with opportunities and protect them from all forms of discrimination and abuse

growth should not be at the expense of democracy, diversity and difference of opinion. Such a choice should not be accepted even temporarily, or in the face of adverse conditions and public concerns. Democracy cannot be contingent upon stability and economic growth. Development is closely tied to the equality of all citizens. If development benefits one segment of society at the expense of others, it ultimately obstructs socio-economic advancement. (6) A legal framework for socioeconomic development must be adopted that prevents relapse to the old order and that ensures that all people benefit from development. Changing the legal framework in this way will require reforming, respecting and enforcing the new laws. (7) It is critical to support economic development by societal consensus, including all political parties. Mr. Bahaa el-Din explained that one party, even if that party enjoyed a majority, cannot impose its developmental vision on the country since inclusive development should be supported by all people.

27. He warned that the real challenge in achieving transition is to recognize what is required in terms of time, effort and sacrifice. He suggested several steps in order to achieve a successful transition. First, countries should devise quick and practical policies to create employment opportunities for the youth, for example by focusing on major sectors, small and medium enterprises, agriculture, tourism, etc. Second, countries should change taxation policies. He said that taxes that sustain development should be progressive and considered fair by people. He added that people should be convinced that their taxation system is devoted to realizing their long-term interest, which is tied to the ability and professionalism of public tax collection entities. Awareness among people regarding taxation should be strengthened. He also suggested devising new policies to control public spending and enhance the transparency of the treasury. He suggested investing tax revenues in funding basic services in health, education and social welfare.
28. Third, Mr. Bahaa el-Din noted the need to stop wasting resources and direct subsidies to groups that are in need. In this context, he referred to the success of “conditional cash transfers” which were adopted in South America and could be replicated in the Arab region. Fourth, countries should emphasize the role of the State as a regulator, providing oversight and essential services and the necessary infrastructure to all citizens. They should focus on economic activities with strategic goals. Finally, countries should create an enabling environment and legal framework to engage women in economic

and political processes, promote sustainable development and eradicate poverty while achieving social justice. He stated that the aim was not merely to increase the number of economically and politically active women but rather to provide women with opportunities and to protect them from all forms of discrimination and abuse.

2. *The role of the State in balancing growth and social justice*

- 29.** Mr. Eduardo Suplicy, Senator, Brazil, began his presentation by citing Nobel Prize economist Amartya Sen, who noted several examples of how democracy, freedom of expression and of the press had enabled societies to solve problems, including severe famines. Quoting Sen, Mr. Suplicy asserted that the history of the Middle East includes a large number of episodes of public discussions and participatory politics through dialogue. He pointed out that Sen's starting point was the theory of "Justice as Fairness" elaborated by John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice*, who established two principles of justice: (1) each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others; and (2) social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that: (a) they contribute the greatest benefit to the least-advantaged members of society; and (b) offices and positions are open to everyone under conditions of equal access to opportunities.
- 30.** The principles he attributed to Sen and Rawls drove him and Antonio Maria da Silveira to propose the guaranteed minimum income scheme. The proposal was approved by the Federal Senate in 1991, initiating a debate in Brazil. Amendments to the bill were suggested, namely that minimum income should be granted to needy families only if the children attended school on a regular basis. Supplemental income would ensure that the children would not have to work to help their family survive. The National Congress approved a law which authorized the Federal Government to cover 50 per cent of the cost incurred by municipalities in implementing the minimum income scheme linked to social and educational criteria. Different programmes based on the aforementioned principles were also implemented. In 2001 the Federal Government agreed to finance 100 per cent of expenses for all municipalities in Brazil to start a guaranteed minimum income programme related to educational opportunities, and other programmes were also implemented. In 2003, the Government decided to unify these different programmes into a single "Bolsa Familia" programme. By December 2011 there were more than 50 million Brazilians registered under the programme

Why not extend to everyone, rich or poor, the right to participate in the nation's wealth, the same as the right of being Brazilian?

which contributed to the reduction of absolute poverty and the level of inequality in Brazil.

31. Mr. Suplicy acknowledged that despite progress, Brazil has one of the highest levels of inequality in the world. The poorest 40 per cent live on 10 per cent of the national income, while the richest 10 per cent live on more than 40 per cent. He maintained that Brazil needed to implement an unconditional basic citizen's income in order to move towards a more efficient and direct eradication of absolute poverty and to achieve greater equality and guarantee greater freedom for all. In 2004, the Government approved a step-by-step implementation of a basic citizen's income for those most in need. One day all inhabitants of Brazil, including foreigners who have lived there for five years or more, will have the right to basic income.
32. He explained that basic income should be as high as possible in order to meet each person's vital needs, and should be paid to all inhabitants of a country, regardless of an individual's origin, race, sex, age, civil, social or economic condition. He pointed out that the most often heard objections to basic income were that it stimulates idleness, but he asked why not extend to everyone the right to participate in the nation's wealth, just as the right of being Brazilian is extended to everyone.
33. Mr. Suplicy suggested that the process of turning basic income into reality could start in communities or municipalities. He emphasized that to make basic income feasible for the whole country, significant resources were needed, which were collected through the creation of a citizen's fund that received 50 per cent of the resources generated by authorization or concession of natural resources exploitation; 50 per cent of the revenues from the rentals of Federal Government real estate; and 50 per cent of the revenues generated by services and public works and other resources. The output generated by the investments of the fund resources will be used to pay basic income to all the residents of Brazil.
34. Mr. Suplicy ended his presentation with a proposal for an alternative funding scheme that calls for smart environmentalism that embraces incentives. It calls for a global emission tax that charges people for the damage done by their carbon emissions. Revenues would go to citizens as an energy dividend. A similar scheme is in place in the State of Alaska, which pays each citizen an annual dividend from all revenues. The point of this scheme is to apply the wealth of a community or a nation to a fund that provides basic income to everyone.

3. *The role of the media in democratic transitions*

35. Mr. Ibrahim Helal, Director of News and former Director of Editorial Development, Al-Jazeera Network, highlighted the need for exact terms to describe recent events in some Arab countries. He said that “uprisings” are different from “revolutions”, and stated his preference for the second term. He indicated that it was not possible to compare the Arab experience with those of such countries as Latvia and Chile in other regions of the world because events transpiring in the Arab world are being televised and certain actions are being broadcast while other events are not. Another difference between the Arab revolt and other revolutions is the absence of super powers in triggering the events. He underscored that mass movements calling for change in the Arab region did not have a leadership nor were they movements inspired by religion or ideology. This is new and unprecedented pattern of revolution and the world has witnessed historic moments. He noted that people were fully aware that their acts were being recorded, which may have influenced their actions. He emphasized that media coverage of such events as 11 September 2001 and the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan was limited to a fraction of the whole experience. Only history will tell if the media provided an accurate depiction of reality or not.
36. Mr. Helal differentiated between formal or official media and privately owned media. He said that, as part of the ruling establishment, formal or official media outlets could only play a limited role and privately owned media was influenced by traditional trends and culture within the institution, competition with other media outlets and the pressures from the network owner. Mr. Helal mentioned that the three major media outlets in the region, namely Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya and BBC Arabic had changed the policies of Governments that support them. A State that supports a major media outlet must allow it to be objective, because a departure from objectivity would render the network irrelevant and would force it out of the market. During the Arab revolution, any tardiness in coverage, delay in relating the latest news or sending a news correspondent to the site of emerging stories would likewise render the network unimportant or force it out of the market. The need for objective, swift coverage put great pressure on the professional cadre of the network and also influenced the countries who own the networks.

What is transpiring in the Arab world is the first televised revolution, where certain actions are being related by television networks while other events are not

There is competition between media networks in disseminating bad news while the public is increasingly becoming a prisoner of “breaking news”

The key to the Arab Spring is Justice for Palestinians. We refuse to be de-contextualized or isolated. A great deal of the lack of credibility of previous regimes is their hopelessness and helplessness in the face of justice for Palestinians as well as the collusion of some with Israeli authorities

37. The role of the media, according to Mr. Helal, is to cover and disseminate the facts. However, he noted that the presence of cameras may have protected the demonstrators from gross violations of their human rights. He also highlighted the fact that the uprisings in Arab countries were independent and self aware, being neither led nor mobilized by the media. The role of social media including Facebook and Twitter was limited to communication. The impact of the media on the path of revolutions was limited because they were unable to capture or broadcast what was actually transpiring in the streets. Although the Islamists bore the greatest influence on the outcome of the referendum on the Egyptian constitution, networks and social media did not capture that aspect of the events as they unfolded.
 38. Mr. Helal also highlighted the role of competition between media outlets in covering and disseminating bad news. He also added that the public is increasingly becoming the prisoner of “breaking news”, a trend stemming from competition between the major networks. Negative competition has shifted media focus towards disseminating bad news, although media outlets could focus instead on raising awareness and informing the public.
4. *The role of external factors in transition*
39. In her presentation, Ms. Hanan Ashrawi, Palestine Liberation Organization Executive Committee Member and Member of the Palestinian National Council, pointed out that recent Arab events were not isolated, but were influenced by major actors and factors that are shaping the future of the region. Social media was one factor, constituting a space for interaction and mobilization for popular resistance. She noted that the impact of external forces is always transformative, but neither exclusively positive nor negative. They can trigger, shape or change situations, and they can undermine constructive change. The hidden agendas, self interest and military interventions of external forces are detrimental, while other the forces of ideas, history, development and human rights have been positive.
 40. Ms. Ashrawi stated that recent events in the Arab world are debunking many myths that authoritarian regimes have used to avoid accountability; particularly the myth that human rights are culture-specific, or that human rights violate the traditions and/or religion of countries of the region. Other myths claim that Arab people are not ready for democracy or that they are genetically predisposed to violence, arguments that Israel uses to maintain control over the Palestinians and hegemony over the

region. Global instruments are available to protect human rights and human security, which place greater value on the individual than on sovereignty. The benefits of external intervention should be measured in accordance with its final aims and goals. Individuals involved in uprisings have refused to have their actions redefined or diluted by external intervention that carries the taint of colonialism and post colonialism. However, many have welcomed protection and support for institution-building and economic development.

41. Numerous interlocking factors are involved in the case of Palestine. A whole nation is occupied and displaced and continuous attempts are being made to replace it. One fundamental key to the success of the Arab Spring is restoring justice to the Palestinians. International law and the international community are the anchors of justice and that kind of intervention is needed. Global rule of law could play a fundamental role in leveling the playing field if the view of the region shifted from the prism of Israeli interests. International actors must stop applying double standards to Palestinians and Israelis. Non-State actors in such a context can assist in establishing the needed institutions for an equitable playing field and support home-grown initiatives and legal structures that aim to dislodge systems of inequity.
42. Ms. Ashrawi closed her presentation with a call for a change of facts on the ground. Managing diversity and pluralism could take place through inclusive actions that mobilize people from different walks of life. It is essential that newly established political parties work with non-governmental organizations and civil society to fill the vacuum created by the fall of old regimes. It is essential to ensure that women and youth receive the support needed in order to avoid replacing authoritarian regimes with absolutist and closed regimes.

Discussions

43. Participants started by defining “counter-revolution” as the action of forces that undermine the principles of the revolution, particularly that when States are threatened by revolutions they often take counter-revolution steps towards self-preservation. There was agreement that the political map of the Arab world was being reshaped.
44. Participants reiterated the importance of social justice and the need to manage economic expectations.

Stretching the limits of sovereignty would stretch the limits of control and allow interventions on behalf of the disenfranchised and vulnerable

Quoting the women of Tahrir Square: We stood shoulder to shoulder with men during the uprisings facing the same kind of risks, now when we demand our places in the political process we are told, it is not the time for you girls, it is the time for democracy

45. Participants stressed the important role of media before, during and after major events. The media should focus on bringing the concerns and demands of the Arab citizen to the whole world.
46. The need for the impartiality of the international community was stressed again. The fragility of the transition could succumb to foreign intervention and counter-forces aimed at containing the transitions and distorting their purposes. There were concerns that democracy would undermine the rights of the minorities.
47. The participants agreed that it was very important to focus on the good governance of natural resources and the accumulation and redistribution of wealth. Some were of the opinion that the current situation could lead to a new reality in which a formal democracy would allow for continuous exploitation of the region's resources, put an end to poverty, sustain development and achieve inclusive growth. The efficient use of natural resources to finance the development of Arab countries should be enshrined in national constitutions. It was also mentioned that proposals need to be made to reduce debt burdens.
48. Policies should focus on investments in transnational projects in electricity, water, and transport and other labour-intensive sectors. The creation of small and medium enterprises that generate jobs should be encouraged and reform initiatives should focus on improving the governance of the public sector, achieving efficiency gains, fulfilling basic needs and raising living standards.
49. At the political level, concepts are being considered and discussed, including institution-building, rule of law and respect for human rights.

Theme II – Pre-empting Civil Strife and a Return to Autocracy

C. From the street to the political arena

50. The session was moderated by Ms. Michelle Bachelet, former President of Chile and Executive Director of UN-Women. Ms. Bachelet characterized the transition in Arab countries as an opportunity irrespective of the outcome. In addition to the different historical, political and cultural experiences between Arab uprisings and transitions in other countries, she suggested that the global context is completely different, as are the means of communication through social media and the relevance or irrelevance of traditional political institutions and societal organizations including parties, unions, etc. However, like other

countries that have gone through transitions, Arab countries will need to select and design transitional justice instruments capable of addressing past atrocities and injustices without driving further divisions into the social fabric of the nation. Despite considerable unknown factors facing this process, there are a number of known factors including the demand for freedom, democracy, equity, justice and a new social contract particularly by the youth and women of the region who were at the forefront of these uprisings. She ended her introductory remarks by emphasizing the importance of participation for building strong institutions. Those individuals that led the protests need to learn how to meaningfully translate their roles in the uprisings into active participation in the political arena and compete with established political parties. In the transitional period, this is particularly important because many who participated in the uprisings, specifically women, are being excluded from participating in the transitional political process.

Presentations

1. *The transition of popular movements to political parties*

51. In his presentation, Mr. Pavol Demeš, Transatlantic Fellow of the German Marshall Fund of the United States, former Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of Slovakia and former Minister for International Relations, Slovakia, indicated that despite similarities, every transition is unique in some way. The role and the impact of cultural specificities should not be underestimated. Transforming popular movements into political parties can take many forms and should be decided in the light of history, culture and society. Those social actors that bring about change are rarely the ones that join transitional governments and influence decision-making. Frequently, individuals that were in power prior to the transition change their name and appearance and continue to rule and consolidate power. Newcomers often have neither the financial resources nor the experience to compete with them. He outlined a number of lessons learned from other transitions including the need for capacity-building initiatives in the arena of political organization, fundraising and communication. Mr. Demeš also stated that the role of the international community was gaining more importance as people were more interested in assistance. He suggested that establishing additional channels for exchanges and contacts could be helpful to the success of the transition processes.

Good governance is supreme justice.

It aims at placing the assets and riches of a country at the disposal of its people in an equitable and transparent manner

To establish an atmosphere of trust between the State and citizens, forge national consensus on the key challenges facing Mauritania and establish a precise calendar of action, national days of consultation were established that brought together all political parties, all representatives of civil society and all the State institutions

2. Containing counter-revolutionary forces

52. A presentation was made by Mr. Ely Ould Mohamed Vall, former President, Mauritania, on key characteristics of malfunctioning authorities in Arab countries. Authoritarian power has monopolized political and social representation since independence, Arab civil societies and organizations have been subordinated to politico-military structures and there has been a deficit in democratic governance and the political participation of citizens. In his opinion these factors gave rise to a deficit in individual and collective freedoms, and led to more corruption, unemployment, poverty and an increasing need for real democracy. The combination of those elements resulted in the emergence of the Arab Spring. In order to contain anti-revolutionary forces, it was necessary for new Governments to initiate political, social and economic structures to ensure the attainment of the objectives of the Arab revolutions.

53. He elaborated on the Mauritanian example (2005-2007), stressing the role undertaken by the democratic transition government to create an environment of trust between different political actors and to ensure that the people of Mauritania participated in the transitional process. The process sought to establish credible democratic institutions stemming from free and transparent elections, reform the judicial system to ensure its independence, promote individual and collective freedoms and basic citizenship rights, and enhance governance and transparency in public affairs management. National days of consultation were established that brought together all political parties, representatives of civil society including non-governmental organizations and unions and institutions of State to participate in the process. The aim was to establish national consensus on the problems facing the country and define a precise calendar of activities and priorities to address these challenges. To establish an atmosphere of trust and confidence between citizens and the State, a number of key decisions were made. First, a clear and precise electoral calendar was established, sending a message that the transitional government was not there to stay. Second, a general amnesty was declared for all political prisoners and all exiles, who were allowed to return and participate in the restructuring of their country. Third, to avert potential conflicts of interest, individuals who were part of the transitional government were declared ineligible to participate in the elections. Fourth, all political parties were allowed to take part, even those not previously recognized. Fifth, an independent electoral commission with

full powers was created, with members chosen by national consensus. Six, additional commissions were created, which included representatives of civil society organizations, political parties and State institutions: a high commission for media ensured equal access of all candidates to the official media of the State; a human rights commission; and a commission to oversee the natural resources of the state, namely oil. Finally, a constitutional referendum was carried out that limited the term of the president and a law was passed requiring a minimum 20 per cent representation of women in elected posts. The first electoral results surpassed the quota with 23 per cent of the seats in the national assembly won by women and 33 per cent in municipalities. Additional measures were taken to improve the administration of public affairs, namely increasing the salaries of State employees by 100 per cent to fight poverty and corruption.

54. Mr. Vall closed his presentation reflecting on the role of external powers in the process, noting that despite all efforts and resulting in part from Mauritania's regional isolation, there was little international support for these reforms and the country was subjected to a coup d'état before the reforms could take root.

3. *Political participation and electoral reform*

55. In his presentation, Mr. Vidar Helgesen, Secretary-General of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, pointed out that all democratic transitions were unique and each provides valuable lessons for others. He gave the example of the electoral process in Tunisia which even if not flawless was remarkably successful and more participatory and inclusive than other elections in the region have been. The proportional system adopted was well-suited to the country's needs and resulted in the election of a broadly representative assembly that ensured the inclusion of women through quotas. He stated that the independence of the electoral management body was critical to the credibility of the process. The same factor is evident in Egypt where the judiciary is seen as independent. As a result, voter turnout was much higher in Tunisia and Egypt than in Morocco, for example, where the interior ministry continues to manage the elections.
56. Mr. Helgesen also emphasized that the creation of sustainable democracy is a long-term process. He highlighted the need to ensure the integrity of the whole electoral process, from one election to the next. Sustainable democracy also requires a level playing field between candidates, security for voters and

It takes time to build a democratic culture in which people engage as citizens and not as subjects. If society is marked by a culture of autocracy whether in the family or in national governance, it will take decades to instill a participatory culture

candidates, freedom of media, transparency in campaign financing and recourse to an independent mechanism for appeals. He gave examples from different countries in Latin America, Africa and the United States of America where fundamental political equality between citizens was undermined through campaign financing, the influence of crime, etc. He pointed out that elections and participation reflect the societies in which they take place. Therefore, where cultural traditions were in conflict with principles of electoral integrity, civic education, awareness-raising and legislative reforms were needed. He also emphasized the fact that political parties are critical vehicles of representation but that they need to reinvent themselves to foster true participation rather than simply consolidating the power of party elites. Finally he argued that the international community can play a role in supporting electoral reform and participation, but such support needs to go beyond technical fixes to support fundamental political processes. Democracy support will go nowhere unless it is integrated into a coherent approach to foreign security and economic development. To be truly effective, international actors must adopt a peer approach to support democracy and build on a spirit of genuine partnership and reject the traditional donor-beneficiary approach.

Discussions

57. Participants stressed the need for constitutional reform to protect the rights of opposition voices in Arab democracies. They pointed out that, in general, reports focused on the causes that led to the revolutionary movements and less on the challenges ahead. However, in Tunisia, where the elections were considered to be a success, new obstacles were emerging due to the degradation of the socio-economic situation. People need to be protected from the hegemony of one party, while at the same time, it is crucial to preserve political stability in order to sustain the socio-economic renaissance. People need to be empowered in parliaments and civil society and women need to acquire leadership skills to enhance their participation in rebuilding and leading nations.

D. *Social cohesion, transitional justice and human rights*

58. The session was moderated by Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Mr. Janneh stated that democratic transitions were valuable opportunities. Based on the experience of African countries, he

indicated that there was no single model for democratic transition and each Arab country would have to trace its own path.

Presentations

1. *Islam in constitutions: equality and citizenship rights*

59. A presentation was made by Mr. Abdelmonem Aboul Fotouh, Secretary-General, Arab Medical Union, and presidential candidate in Egypt. Speaking of the close relationship between the State and Islam, Mr. Aboul Fotouh pointed out that Islam does not advocate a binding pre-set model of political rule. He said that the concept of the State in Islam stems from the concept of the individual's earthly duties and responsibilities and the State should organize and guide the actions of individuals. The overwhelming majority of moderate Muslims believe that religion constitutes the basic moral and intellectual reference of any political undertaking. Separating the "church" and the State was not applicable in Islam since the concept of the organized church did not exist therein. In practice, however, the separation was implemented and religious institutions were besieged by post-colonial authoritarian regimes that took over most Arab countries. This resulted in depriving society of religious debate.

60. He said that it was not the role of the religion to define the shape of the State in all its details and components. He stressed that past experience in implementing sharia law to govern States only highlights faulty application, understanding and grasp of the law. He also stressed that universal moral values that protect the interests of all human beings and govern human behaviour cannot be separated between the State and religion. Mr. Aboul Foutouh noted that discussions of the Arab region focus on cultural Islam and Arabism rather than on religious Islam and ethnic Arabism. Christian Arabs are considered to be part of this culture, where full equality and social justice have been and should remain the cornerstone of society and the State. He concluded by saying that the absence of religion has been transmuted into an absence of values, which has led to a dynamic based on the righteousness of power instead of the power of righteousness.

2. *Ensuring equity and citizenship*

61. In her presentation, Ms. Asma Jahangir, Chair, Human Rights Commission and President, Supreme Court Bar Association,

The concept of separating "church" and the State is not applicable in Islam since the concept of the organized church did not exist therein

The role of religion is to constitute the basic moral and intellectual reference of any political project and not define the shape of the State...

Promoting the rights of women is not the right thing to do but the smart thing to do for any society. . . . The emphasis on citizenship for women and minorities is critical in this process

Pakistan, stressed that in the absence of political parties, society continues to be based on tribal principles. Therefore, challenges facing the transition process included rallying people to the values of human rights and politics rather than to ethnic and tribal loyalties and establishing a close link between democratic transitions and the rights of women which are not represented in ethnic and tribal formations. One approach to the transition process involves converting from a security-based State to a welfare State and adopting non-discriminatory policies through representative leadership. It is not enough to enact quotas for the participation of women in parliament. The participation of women is needed across all sectors, particularly in the judiciary where they can play an important role in devising and implementing gender-sensitive laws.

62. She also warned against confusing cultures with customs. Many cultural traditions and ideas may be emancipatory, but there are other customs that suppress women. The interpretation of laws should reflect internationally accepted standards and instruments. Asian and African experience indicates that there is greater religious and communal tension and strife when the State is based on religion. Intimate connection between the State and religion ties the rights of women to religious principles of family life. She stressed that it is crucial that religious leaders accept true democracy for all and avoid opposition with the State. Universal human rights must be accepted, recognized and applicable to all citizens with no possibilities for multiple interpretations. Ms. Jahangir concluded that this was a critical time to be vigilant.

3. *From privilege to competition: the role of the private sector*

63. Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bulgaria, began his presentation with a quote from Ralf Dahrendorf, a prominent sociologist, who once said that a democratic transition includes three steps: changing the constitution (6 months), changing the economy (6 years) and building a civil society (60 years). He explained that demands for democracy, good economy and justice are closely linked to human dignity. One of the key challenges is that social change usually lags behind political transition. Yet without social change it is impossible to build a society where all people have fair access to economic opportunities. Accordingly, he argued that it is essential to make substantial changes to the systems of care in society including access to education, health and economic opportunities. Most important in this process is the restoration of justice. An independent judicial system can mediate between

We cannot have economic transition without justice. And there is no justice if people do not have access to fair economic opportunity

different parties and clearly outline how contracts will be upheld. This in turn will trigger economic development. People will take to the streets again if there is a failure to restore justice.

64. Mr. Mladenov considered the question of how economic change could nurture civil society. For many in Eastern Europe, economic transformation and privatization generated a lot of questions about equity and justice. It is important to consider the means of creating transparent market systems that support civil rights and the autonomy of the media. Mr. Mladenov highlighted the need for regulations that are strict and that establish a clear separation between public and private interests.
65. Another important challenge to the transition to democracy is to prevent the emergence of parallel structures that undermine the transition. He argued that systematic effort is needed to dismantle parallel structures of the previous regime designed to protect the privilege and power of elites. Economic reform, strong constitutions and democratic establishments are the most important protection from such parallel institutions.
66. He closed his presentation with the argument that the State should focus on market mechanisms that support civil rights. In this regard, the private media can be an agent of change. However, he warned that it can also become a tool for particular political, economic or social agendas. Economic change does in fact encourage the engagement of civil society. In free economies, people seize opportunities and take decisions. A free economic environment facilitates the fight against corruption, helps create strong institutions and provide social welfare and encourages investments. The key factors that will foster the right conditions for investment and growth are: (a) responsible spending without relying on credit; (b) sustainable social cohesion; (c) functional judiciary and (d) universal application of rules and justice. He closed his presentation with the statement that the success of the Arab Spring will be evaluated by the degree to which Arab people succeed in building a stronger sense of justice, fair economic opportunities and democratic structures that protect human rights. It is the responsibility of the international community to help Arab countries avoid the mistakes that were made in other countries throughout the world.

4. *Dealing with the legacies of the past*

67. A presentation was made by Mr. Essop Pahad, former Minister in the Presidency, South Africa, who stated that the Arab Spring is a misnomer since it was an Afro-Arab Spring. He went on to

As part of economic reform, there needs to be systematic effort to prevent the emergence of parallel structures and dismantle the networks of privilege set up by individuals from the previous regimes who will seek to protect their power

Conflicts are never singular, always plural... so how can backward looking institutions meant to offer up national consensus regarding contested histories ever achieve what they advertise? Fact finding does not resolve the issue of values

The confession and repentance of individuals required by the truth commissions of South Africa were the first step in the necessary and systematic social reconstruction required to “undo a set of racial legacies” entrenched in the social and economic infrastructure of the country

discuss the plural characters of conflicts and the atrocities committed that in turn determine how one ought to go about addressing their legacies. According to Mr. Pahad, the plural nature of these conflicts creates a complex set of necessities and a contest for primacy among the different victim groups. He gave the example, of the aftermath of World War II, during which the question of how victims and perpetrators would live together was scarcely raised. If anything, the idea was that victims would be relocated with the consequence that, “Palestinians are having to pay an inhuman price.” In South Africa, in the absence of a clearly victorious party, truth commissions were established as “a body that focuses on the past, investigates a pattern of abuses over a period of time, rather than a specific event; it is a temporary body with a limited mandate”. He explained that the commission was intended “less to punish offenders and more to transform the national consciousness of the social and economic legacy of the past.” The commissions created a space in which the victims of apartheid were able to voice their pain, but the commission could have played a more active role in changing the moral landscape of the country and in forging national consensus on critical past injustices. In this and other issues too little focus was given to trying to affect change and correct past injustices. However, despite these shortcomings, they managed to build consensus on such issues as the rejection of apartheid and the injustices of past educational and economic exclusion and the move toward an inclusive democracy. Mr. Pahad suggested that capitalism cannot offer answers to such injustices. A new socio-economic paradigm is required in which the interests and aspirations of the people are paramount. He also argued that it was impossible to carry out fundamental socio-economic reform without independent trade union movements.

68. Finally, he noted that the truth commissions of South Africa performed a valuable function in the early years of political transition due to one specific feature: requiring confession and repentance of individuals as a condition of amnesty. He pointed out that this was the first step in the necessary and systematic social reconstruction required to “undo a set of racial legacies” entrenched in the social and economic institutions of the country.

Discussions

69. Participants stressed the importance of building citizen-States where women enjoy full rights and equal participation in building and

governing the State and the society. They stressed that it is impossible to guarantee freedom at the expense of equality or vice-versa and that democracy requires participation, thus the importance of civil liberties. Concerns were raised about double standards in dealing with Arab countries. Although Arabs have been encouraged to rise against oppression, the Palestinian people are being asked to give up their resistance and remain hostage to oppression. Participants pointed out that it is necessary to adopt a different approach in dealing with the range of internal and external factors that hinder transition to democracy in the region. The participants also mentioned that it is of primary importance to prevent any further opposition between Governments and their populations.

Round table: future prospects for the Arab world

70. A round-table discussion was moderated by Ms. Rima Khalaf, Executive Secretary of ESCWA. The panelists were invited to explore prospects for the region as a whole and for selected countries namely Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Yemen. The panelists were asked to examine the opportunities and obstacles to achieving true democracy in the case of each individual country and the optimum political, economic and social strategies to be adopted.

Presentations

71. In his presentation, Mr. Rafic Abdessalem, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tunisia, said that the movements in Tunisia and Egypt were indicative of future trends. He said that it is now clear that authoritarian regimes with poor economic, social and political governance are set to fall. Mr. Abdessalem emphasized that this is not only because of the regimes' transgressions against human rights but also due to rising poverty, marginalization and corruption. As such, authoritarian regimes have lost all the elements sustaining them in power.
72. The argument of Arab exceptionalism (to democracy) no longer holds; the theory was based on an incorrect interpretation of Arab cultural values. Arab people have expressed their aspiration and demand for democracy and political reform after decades of oppression and suffering as a result of the political and economic deficits. The changes of 2011 could have happened decades earlier had they not been impeded by the balance of international power.

The case of Tunisia has proven to the world that change is possible and the revolution has now acquired legitimacy through fair elections

73. The case of Tunisia has proven to the world that change is possible and the revolution has now acquired legitimacy through fair elections. With an elected democratic Coalition Government, the country will forge ahead and construct a new future. He highlighted the fact that Tunisia has shifted from one party rule and even with the newly conducted elections has opted to forge a Coalition Government where all political parties are learning to govern by overlapping consensus. He said that the existing administrative traditions helped maintain order during the transitional period, which prevented the collapse of the State. Mr. Abdesslem minimized fears of autocratic relapse, maintaining that they were not justified since all parties were represented in the Government and are keen to preserve and maintain the gains and benefits made so far. Political goals are to be achieved respecting the rights of all citizens, particularly the rights of women. He admitted that the challenges and expectations were many and warned that the outcomes of reforms will take a long time before they materialize, but he was confident that the people have the will and determination to succeed.
74. Mr. Amr Moussa, former Secretary-General, League of Arab States and presidential candidate in Egypt, said that the world is witnessing a new reality. The time has come for what he termed the “Arab movement for change” rather than Arab spring. The events that were triggered in Tunisia have put forward a new reality. The transition from autocracy to democracy is the clear choice of all Arab people at this point in time. It will apply at all levels of government; national, municipal and local. There is no going back to the old order and the new regional order is replacing rigid and autocratic frameworks with flexible policies that are based on popular will. Prior to the Arab movement for change, the role and influence of Arab people within the regional system had regressed compared to Turkey and Iran. He pointed out that the new regional order will be Arab-led, an era of consensus, where citizenship is a right for all without discrimination.
75. He noted that the democratic movement in the Arab world is made up of Islamic parties, indicating that religion should be respected as a framework and reference but that countries should be ruled through the constitution which provides for the establishment of a democratic and modern State. Within that context, he highlighted the Azhar documents, which emphasized the concepts of democracy and modernity, freedom of speech, expression, scientific research, innovation and culture.

The new regional order will be Arab-led

76. In Egypt, Mr. Moussa pointed out that free and transparent elections were held, commanding respect of the results. In the new Parliament there are Islamist parties. There are also other political groups, including liberal parties. He underscored that Egypt is now entering the era of consensus. Egyptians are learning to talk to each other. Mr. Moussa predicted that decisions would not be taken by majority and imposed on others.
77. He expressed his confidence for Egypt's future and current efforts to rebuild Egypt based on two elements, the first of which is democracy. For democracy to survive, it should be the outcome of free and transparent elections. In addition, the separation of powers, the independence of the judiciary, the rule of law and functioning state institutions are needed. The second priority is reforming laws and legislation that prevent corruption and govern society providing for healthcare and education and protecting the environment, cities and villages.
78. Mr. Moustafa Al Barghouti, former Minister for Information, former presidential candidate in Palestine and Civil Rights Activist, addressed the question of democracy under occupation. He said that recent Arab events were triggered by two factors, a political aspiration to freedom and a social aspiration to justice. The people took to the streets in the hope that democracy will free the Arab region from corruption, despotism and the one-party rule. He stated his hope that democracy would be continuous and not a mere phase in history.
79. In the case of Palestine, it is of utmost importance to avoid double standards. The international community has demonstrated an appreciation of the Arab uprisings while expressed concerns for the Arab-Israeli peace agreements. People in the occupied land suffer more than anywhere in the world from oppression and the absence of justice. The Palestinian people gained confidence based on the ramifications of the popular uprisings and demonstrators took to the streets, demanding Palestinian unity. The demand for Palestinian unity stemmed from the urgent need to face occupation and reclaim the democratic process that was weakened as a result of internal divisions. Paradoxically, internal divisions and the international blockade resulted in one-party rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He stressed that it is not possible to build a democracy under occupation but that the democratic process within the Palestinian movement for liberation was nevertheless necessary.

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The movements in Libya have changed the image of the country from a single product, namely oil, and single ruler to a country where women play a historic role in humanitarian assistance and in the economic, social, cultural and political spheres

Multiparty dialogue has become necessary and power should be in the hands of the social and political majority

80. Mr. Al Barghouti noted the likelihood of revolution and popular resistance in Palestine, inspired by the Arab uprising. He asserted that there will be increased Arab solidarity with the Palestinian people, given the fallen autocratic regimes always suppressed the peoples' solidarity with Palestine. The Arab depth of the Palestinian struggle will be regained.
81. The Palestinian opposition has proposed a new strategy to end the apartheid and achieve democracy as an alternative to unsuccessful negotiations with Israel. It is based on achieving freedom for the Palestinians instead of a settlement with Israel. This strategy was inspired by the Arab uprisings and will be built on four pillars namely: popular resistance including diplomatic resistance within the United Nations organization; international solidarity movement to boycott Israeli interests and investments; internal unity and democracy; and institution building. He indicated the difficulty of the latter exercise under occupation and concluded by reaffirming that the Palestinian people will achieve their rights and enjoy freedom and dignity.
82. Ms. Naima Djibril, Judge and Member, Council to Support the Participation of Women in Decision Making, Libya, quoted Mahatma Ghandi and declared that the slogan that inspired the movements in Libya was if the people want to see change, they have to make that change. The movements in Libya have changed the image of the country from a single product, namely oil, and single ruler to a country where women play a historic role in humanitarian assistance and in the economic, social, cultural and political spheres. Although women participated extensively in the popular movements, their role during the uprisings did not lead to actual participation in provisional governing structures.
83. Ms. Djibril stressed that real democracy cannot preclude the participation of women and youth in decision-making and political action. The State needs to regulate the intrinsic rights of all citizens and mainstream them in all policies and programmes. She indicated that affirmative action in defining a quota for women's representation in political institutions is well-justified in view of the history of injustice against them. Ms. Djibril expressed concerns about the role of Arab women in view of the prevalence of political Islam and the resulting prejudice against women and disregard for their right to participate in decision-making. However, she expressed her confidence in an enlightened, moderate brand of Islam.
84. Mr. Abdel Karim al-Eryani, former Prime Minister, Yemen, indicated that the Arab uprising had reached Yemen in spite of the fact that it is one of the least developed countries and that

the percentage of the population that are connected to the Internet is one of the lowest in the Arab world. He attributed the Arab uprising in Yemen to the country's experience of unity which was sealed in the nineties and which has taught the Yemeni people the value of collective action, which explains the quick reaction to the events in Tunisia and Egypt. A year after the beginning of the movements in Yemen, people are still protesting in the streets, although tribal and military objectives have taken over some of the protest movement. Nevertheless, change in Yemen is irreversible and is supported by the international community as seen in the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and the Security Council resolution to ensure a peaceful transition. Multiparty dialogue has become necessary and power should be in the hands of the social and political majority. New constitutions should be centered on the citizens rather than the State and the new governing system should be a parliamentary democracy, where local governance mechanisms empower the citizen.

85. Mr. Ali Oumlil, Ambassador of Morocco to Lebanon, indicated that the movements in Morocco did not aim to bring down the regime. Instead, the people demanded reform, in particular they wanted a parliamentary monarchy and an end to corruption. As a result, constitutional reforms were launched and many changes were instituted including condemning torture to ensure the respect of human rights, promoting a central role for political parties and trade unions and guaranteeing the rights of the opposition. It was also agreed that international instruments and conventions would supersede national laws.
86. Speaking of the results of the recent elections and the success of the Islamic party, Mr. Oumlil cautioned that there were many challenges ahead. The winning party will have to address issues such as economic growth, basic freedoms, the rights of women and issues related to youth and minorities. He said that during revolutions, people are usually united by a common purpose, whereas after revolutions, diversity prevails again and the biggest challenge is to establish a true democracy which requires time to succeed.

Discussions

87. Participants agreed that concerns are inherent to all revolutions and times of change, and that relapse into authoritarianism and the absence of political representation of youth are two major concerns. In order to meet expectations, it is essential that constitutions be based on the needs and requirements of citizens.

During revolutions, people are usually united for a common purpose, whereas after revolutions, diversity prevails again. The biggest challenge is to establish a true democracy which requires time to succeed

The peoples of this region are no less worthy, no less capable, no less deserving than other peoples of the world. We, too, have a right to freedom, dignity and justice. I am certain that we will not fail where others have succeeded

The winds of change require a change in mentalities before being reflected in institutional changes

Freedom should be granted to all in order to enable people to shape their own future. Arab people are no less deserving or capable than other people who succeeded in building a better future. At this crucial stage, it is necessary to address all concerns and propose solutions. In particular, solutions should be found to youth unemployment as a way to make the transition real and sustainable.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

A. Date and venue

88. The High-Level Meeting on Reform and Transitions to Democracy was held in Beirut on 15 and 16 January 2012. It brought together a number of Arab and international policymakers, academics, and development practitioners with experience in the fields of democratic transition and reform.

B. Opening

89. Ms. Rima Khalaf, Executive Secretary of ESCWA, welcomed the participants and guests. She said that “the cry of ‘the people want...’ marked the end of one era and the beginning of another”, and the transition from tyranny to democracy was not an easy task and required comprehensive reform of State structures, a new social contract and a strong economy that can guarantee the welfare of all citizens, justice and equity, and the end of marginalization and exclusion. Ms. Khalaf cautioned that the challenges were even greater where despotism left a legacy of underdevelopment and weakened social cohesion and bonds between the citizens. Addressing the problems of the past and building national consensus are priorities in the transitional period in order to safeguard the objectives of the struggle, prevent civil strife and preclude the return of authoritarianism. She said that the meeting would focus on the challenges and the means to address them in the hope of providing an opportunity for fruitful interaction between leaders from this region, and their counterparts who have successfully led processes of democratic transformation in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Referring to the challenges ahead, she concluded by reaffirming her conviction that the region will not fail where others have succeeded.
90. Mr. Najib Mikati, President of the Lebanese Council of Ministers, welcomed all participants in Lebanon, a model of democracy and freedom and a land of dialogue between cultures and religions.

Mr. Mikati stated that the meeting was being held at a crucial point for the Arab region. The winds of change require a change in mentalities before being reflected in institutional changes. He said that in view of its rich natural and human resources, the region has a strategic role in the global economy and the Arab Spring will have implications worldwide. Democracy rests on a few crucial pillars including accountability and good governance and the fight against corruption, extremism and terrorism. In this regard, he stressed the essential role of regional cooperation and the support of the international community and international organizations, particularly the United Nations. Mr. Mikati emphasized that addressing the issue of the Israeli occupation is a prerequisite for the success of transition to democracy in the Arab region.

91. In the keynote address, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, stated that the remarkable events of the last year were reshaping the region and changing the world. Arab citizens were demanding dignity, freedom and democracy. One-man rule with its resulting deprivations was no longer acceptable to Arab citizens calling for an end to corruption. The challenges are many with rising unemployment, increasing cost of food and fuel, human suffering and loss of lives. Mr. Ban Ki-moon stressed that democracy was not easy and said that there were four prerequisites for success, namely: real and genuine reform; inclusive dialogue; placing women at the centre of the region's future; and heeding the voices of youth. He raised the issue of the Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories and said that, "the occupation must end, settlements old and new are illegal," and that, "the status quo offered only the guarantee of future conflict." He also called on the Israeli Government to end violence against civilians and on President Bashar al-Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic to "stop killing his people".

92. The Secretary-General stated that it was necessary to move beyond the assumptions that have traditionally governed relationships between Arab countries and their partners, amongst which was the idea that security was somehow more important than human rights. This has had the effect of "keeping non-democratic States in power, with little to show for either security or people's well-being." He noted the United Nations assistance to Libya, Tunisia and Yemen and emphasized that the United Nations system is fully engaged for a better future of all people, and stressed the necessity of international support and solidarity between countries to spur economic recovery and development.

The Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories must end. So must violence against civilians. Settlements, new and old, are illegal

There can be no democracy worthy of the name without women

C. *Participants*

- 93.** The meeting was attended by 46 participants, including high-level representation from 16 countries from the Arab region, Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa. United Nations Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Under-Secretary-Generals and Executive Secretaries of the UN Regional Commissions were also present, in addition to activists from regional and international organizations. The list of participants is contained in the annex to this report.

D. *Agenda*

- 94.** Presentations and discussions were made over four main sessions, followed by a Roundtable discussion on “Future prospects for the Arab region”.

E. *Documents*

- 95.** Presentations given during the meeting are available on the ESCWA website at: <http://www.escwa.un.org/main/ToD/index.html>.

Annex

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

A. COUNTRIES

Brazil

Eduardo Suplicy
Senator, Sao Paulo

Bulgaria

Nickolay Mladenov
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Chile

Juan Gabriel Valdes
Former Minister for Foreign Affairs
Former Permanent Representative to the
United Nations in New York
Former Special Envoy of the Secretary
General to Haiti

Egypt

Amr Moussa
Former Secretary-General
League of Arab States
Presidential Candidate

Abdelmonem About Fotouh
Secretary-General
Arab Medical Union
Presidential Candidate

Ziad Bahaaeldin Shehata
Member of Parliament

George Ishak
Political Activist
Political Coordinator, Kifaya Movement

Latvia

Vaira Vike-Freiberga
Former President

Lebanon

Najib Mikati
President of the Council of Ministers

Fouad al Sanyoura
Former Prime Minister

Bahiya al Hariri
Member of Parliament
Head of the Education, Higher Education
and Culture Committee

Tarek Mitri
Former Minister for Culture

Mohamad Chatah
Senior Advisor to former Prime Minister
Fouad al Sanyoura

Hani Fahs
Member of the Supreme Shiite Islamic
Council

Nawaf Salam
Permanent Representative of Lebanon to
the United Nations

Clovis Maksoud
Professor of International Law
Director, International Center for South
America

Libya

Naima Djibril
Judge
Member of the Council to Support the
Participation of Women in Decision
Making

Salwa Saad Bugaighis
Legal and Women Affairs Officer
National Libyan Transitional Council

Fathi Baja
Head of the political committee in the
transitional council

Mauritania

Ely Ould Mohamed Vall
Former President

Morocco

Hanane Rahhab
Political Activist, 20 February Movement

Ali Oumlil
Ambassador of Morocco in Lebanon

Pakistan

Asma Jahangir
Chair, Human Rights Commission
President, Supreme Court Bar Association

Palestine

Hanan Ashrawi
Palestinian Liberation Organization
Executive Committee Member
Member of the Palestinian National Council

Moustafa Al Barghouti
Former Presidential Candidate
Civil Rights Activist

Hani Al Masri
Director-General
Palestinian Center for Media Research and
Studies

Tamim Al-Barghouti
Assistant Professor, Georgetown University

Slovakia

Pavol Demes
Transatlantic Fellow of the German
Marshall Fund of the United States
Former Foreign Policy Advisor to the
President of Slovakia
Former Minister for International Relations

South Africa

Essop Pahad
Former Minister in the Presidency

Tunisia

Rafic Abdessalem
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Maya Jribi
General Secretary of Progressive
Democratic Party
Member of Parliament

Malek Saghiri
Political Activist

Turkey

Ahmet Davutoglu
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Yemen

Abdel Karim al-Eryani
Former Prime Minister

B. INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Vidar Helgesen
Secretary-General
International Institute for Democracy and
Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

Ibrahim Helal
Director of News and Former Director of
Editorial Development
Aljazeera Network

C. UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATIONS

Ban Ki-moon
United Nations Secretary-General

Rima Khalaf
Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic and Social
Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Michelle Bachelet
Under-Secretary-General of the United
Nations
Executive Director of UN Women
Former President of Chile

Andrey Vasilyev
Deputy Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic Commission for
Europe (ECE)

Abdoulie Jannah
Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic Commission for
Africa (ECA)

Khawla Mattar
Director
UNIC-Cairo Office

Alicia Barcena
Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic Commission for
Latin America and the Caribbean
(ECLAC)

Amr Nour
Director
Regional Commissions New York Office
(RCNYO)

Noeleen Heyzer
Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic and Social
Commission for Asia and the Pacific
(ESCAP)

Nada Al Nashif
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Regional Office for Arab States,
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