

A. TUNIS DECLARATION ON SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE ARAB REGION

1. We, the representatives of the member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, assembled in Tunis at the twenty-eighth ministerial session of the Commission, commit to social justice as a core value of the Arab and Islamic culture and a foundation for secure, cohesive and prosperous societies.
2. We shall strive to achieve equality and equity in our countries, eradicating poverty, securing environmental sustainability and building partnerships for development, as enshrined in international treaties and declarations.
3. We note with extreme concern the daunting challenges that the Arab region is facing in all aspects of human development. We affirm the importance of addressing threats to social cohesion and combating water scarcity, food and water insecurity, environmental pollution, climate change and the increasing debt of poor Arab countries, which further impede efforts towards social justice and sustainable development.
4. We are deeply alarmed by the escalating conflicts; the continuous loss of lives, livelihoods and resources; and particularly the religious and sectarian tensions that detrimentally affect large segments of our society and undermine social cohesion.
5. We strongly condemn the Israeli military offensives targeting Palestinian civilians and infrastructure, and the latest attack on the Gaza Strip in July and August 2014. We recognize that the Israeli occupation and its policies and practices of discrimination, racial segregation, apartheid and settlement-building and the Judaization of East Jerusalem undermine the basic rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories and the Syrian population in the occupied Golan Heights.
6. We denounce the revival of racist calls to religious purity of States – namely by the Government of Israel and extremist groups in the region – a concept which represents a flagrant violation of the rights of peoples to equality and non-discrimination.
7. We strongly condemn that are our societies face vicious waves of terrorism that limit their opportunities to achieve development and social justice goals, by threatening their resources and capabilities and destroying the development gains that their peoples and Governments secured over decades. We urge organizations in the Arab region to examine the dangers of all aspects of the economic blockade and of money laundering and its links to terrorism financing, and to propose measures to limit such dangers that threaten development, peace and security.
8. We also reaffirm that social justice is as a fundamental prerequisite for peace, security and social cohesion, all of which are, in turn, critical for realizing social justice.
9. We recall the Commission's resolution 304 (XXVII) of 10 May 2012 on the role of participation and social justice in achieving sustainable development, in which it encourages member States to intensify their efforts to mainstream social justice into sustainable development strategies and address the concerns of all social groups.
10. We refer to the 2012-2016 action plan of the League of Arab States¹ and the Amman Declaration on Priorities of the Arab Region for Inclusive and Sustainable Development Post-2015,² which highlight the link between inclusive development and social justice in the region.

¹ The five year plan (2012-2016) stemmed from the second thematic session of the ministers of social affairs of the League of Arab States, held in Cairo, on 28 May 2012.

² Adopted by the Arab ministers of social affairs as an outcome document of the Conference on Priorities of the Arab Region for Inclusive and Sustainable Development Post-2015, held in Amman, on 11 May 2014.

11. We commend the efforts and progress made in ratifying relevant human rights treaties and instruments; in achieving the Millennium Development Goals; and in participating in global processes leading to the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda.

12. We affirm the commitment of Arab States to advancing youth development, especially for those with special needs, and stress the urgent need to overcome the obstacles to youth economic and social empowerment. We also stress the importance of empowering older persons and enhancing their contribution to the development process.

13. We stress the crucial role of sound macroeconomic policies in advancing the mutually reinforcing objectives of social justice and inclusive development, to combat inequalities among social groups within countries.

14. We shall reduce unemployment through indiscriminate means to create employment opportunities; developing productive sectors; addressing the mismatch between educational outcomes and the needs of the labour market; and improving economic governance systems.

15. We affirm the need to develop policies, establish mechanisms to combat violence against women and undertake special measures to increase women's effective participation in decision-making.

16. We shall develop strategies that expand social protection, without exclusion or marginalization to address the requirements of different population groups.

17. We recognize the importance of promoting participatory mechanisms that strengthen the role of civil society institutions and other stakeholders in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of sustainable development policies, especially social protection policies.

18. We shall promote the right to health and education, without exclusion or marginalization, as stipulated by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to empower individuals.

19. We stress the urgent need for policies to ensure the preservation and management of increasingly scarce natural resources, in a manner that respects the environment and guarantees intergenerational justice.

20. We are determined to promote a sense of responsible citizenry and civic engagement in decision-making.

21. In this context, We request the Commission's secretariat:

(a) To incorporate the elements of social justice in its work on the preparation, monitoring and implementation of a post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals, and establish clear implementation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure the achievement of national, regional and global development goals, in accordance with country capabilities;

(b) To strengthen the policy capacity of member States in all relevant fields through training, research and normative work, including through the production of reports on justice, poverty, inequality, social protection, social inclusion, women's empowerment, natural resource management, renewable energy subsidies, access to technology and good governance, as well as trade policies and their role in achieving development;

(c) To provide advisory services and technical support to member States to improve national policy responses so as to enhance social cohesion, tackle youth and women's development challenges, and promote youth and women's participation and empowerment in decision-making processes;

(d) To monitor the effects of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, its implications in the light of regional and international developments and its detrimental impact on the attainment of the multiple dimensions of justice in Palestine and the region as a whole, so as to uphold the human rights-based and legal efforts to condemn the Israeli occupation and support the Palestinians in demanding their rights;

(e) To create a measurement tool to monitor progress in the area of social justice in the Arab region and strengthen the capacity of member States and statistical agencies to collect, build, analyse and disseminate harmonized related indicators.

22. From Tunis, we reaffirm our commitment to social justice for our peoples as a vision of and path to a bright, dignified and prosperous future.