

# REPORT

Civil Society  
Forum-**Southern**  
**Neighbourhood**

28 – 29 May 2015    Brussels



This report has been prepared by the event moderator and, with respect to the reports of the working groups, by the rapporteurs assigned from among civil society participants. The report reflects primarily the views expressed by civil society participants at the Civil Society Forum – Southern Neighbourhood and not necessarily those of the EU. A separate assessment of the Forum, prepared by the Inter-Institutional Steering Group on Civil Society\*, appears at the beginning of this report.

\* Participating EU institutions in the Inter-Institutional Steering Group are: European External Action Service, European Commission (DG NEAR and DEVCO), European Economic and Social Committee and European Committee of the Regions.

# **REPORT ON THE 2<sup>nd</sup> CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM - SOUTHERN NEIGHBOURHOOD, BRUSSELS, 28-29 MAY 2015**

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## 2<sup>nd</sup> Brussels Civil Society Forum, Southern Neighbourhood

### Overall Assessment

Since the events of the Arab Spring in 2011 the EU has upgraded its relations with non-state actors in the Southern Neighbourhood and embarked on a course of actions to improve its strategic engagement with civil society, both at a national and regional level. Several Communications have underscored this new departure and the thinking behind the recalibration of relations.

Important initiatives have been launched and new programmes agreed with partners. While the majority of civil society actions focussed on the national level, there have also been some significant efforts made on a regional basis. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Civil Society Forum, Southern Neighbourhood is situated in efforts towards the expansion and consolidation of partnerships and dialogue in a regional outreach to civil society.

The Forum acted in a dual capacity as:

- a 'stand-alone' event – providing a unique platform for direct dialogue between civil society, authorities (including local authorities) and the five political leaders of the EU institutions; this was the second edition of the Forum and there are strong calls to maintain it as an annual event;
- an important milestone in the progress of an ongoing consultative initiative with Civil Society that aims at creating mechanisms for dialogue between civil society, authorities and the EU.

This latter process has been mediated by an EU Inter-Institutional Steering Group (European External Action Service, European Commission – DG NEAR + DG Devco –, European Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions) with input from the ALF, all of whom, along with the European Parliament, were also responsible for the strategic direction, political management and organisation of the Forum.

The forum also offered the opportunity to expand the ENP review consultation process to include inputs from civil society, in tandem with the EU's soundings of Southern partners and EU Member States.

The political objectives of the second annual Civil Society Forum were achieved by:

- Participation at the highest level in all sectors: Political, Civil Society, Institutional. There was an unprecedented participation by the five EU institution leaders; leading Euromed

NGO organisations, academics, media, local authorities; senior officials from the EEAS and DG NEAR.

- Endorsement by the new EU political leadership of the consultative initiative and a firm commitment to its continuation. With the 'regime change' in November 2014 (new Commission, new HRVP) coupled with an ensuing hiatus of seven months between activities in the consultative initiative, there were concerns among the civil society sector that EU support was cooling off. The high representation from the new political leadership and their firm pronouncements and promises offered a new, positive, political impulse to the initiative;
- Based on the above political commitments, and after almost two years of substantial inputs, there was an expressed renewed acceptance by civil society and agreement to work together through the next, defining stages of the initiative;
- A major focus of the Forum was the recent EU Communication on the ENP review. Important policy issues were discussed and recommendations made regarding a revised ENP;
- In the face of new security challenges in the region and the EU - and in efforts towards addressing root causes and drivers of radicalisation, especially among young people – some exchanges focussed on how to incorporate these issues into a revised ENP.

### Conduct of the Forum

Representatives of more than 100 civil society organisations, academics, media, government representatives, local authorities and international organisations from the Southern Mediterranean and Europe met at the EESC and CoR headquarters in Brussels for the second annual Southern Neighbourhood Civil Society Forum on 28/29 May. HRVP Mogherini, Commissioner Hahn and EP President Schulz, together with EESC President Malosse and CoR President Markkula, made reference to the 18 month-long consultation between the EU and civil society on mechanisms for regional dialogue and marked out the next steps in this process. The two-day Forum comprised of plenary sessions and private working groups. The Forum also provided the opportunity to discuss the current ENP policy review with Civil Society, in addition to the ongoing consultations with EU Member States and Southern Partners. The new security challenges in the region – especially the growing radicalisation of young people – was also discussed in both the plenary sessions and working groups.

The first day was principally dedicated to the 'politicians' who underlined their support of civil society as a real actor in EU–Southern Neighbourhood dialogue and partnership and gave a firm

commitment to the regional dialogue process around which the forum was centred. There followed a round of working groups that examined the ‘Amman and Tunis conclusions’ (earlier regional seminars in the Dialogue process) that outlined the principles, process, themes and activities governing the ongoing initiative, and how they might be taken forward into a Civil Society owned and self-governing process. Discussions were held around three main policy areas: i) socio-economic inequalities; ii) mobility and migration; iii) Shrinking space for civil society.

The second day continued with working groups examining aspects of the ENP Review and how best Civil Society can be involved in real dialogue in this review. These discussions proceeded along the lines proposed by the Communication on ENP review: i) differentiation and flexibility; ii) focus; iii) ownership and visibility. A distillation of these discussions was presented to MD Mingarelli and DG Danielsson, both of whom explained how political promises might be transformed into practical activities and mechanisms in the continuation of the dialogue process. The Forum concluded with a meeting of the Core Advisory Group who analysed the outcomes of the working groups’ recommendations and discussions and outlined the next steps in the process with Steering Group representatives.

### Observations/Recommendations

- Current difficulties and shrinking space within which civil society can exist and operate were highlighted;
- Criticism on how the EU deals with Human Rights and Democracy issues in its relations with partner governments; CSOs request that the EU be more consistent in its dealings with Governments and practise greater coherence between the provision of support (both political and financial) while demanding respect for good governance, human rights, fundamental freedoms with particular attention for women's' rights and youth issues;
- The need for coherence and equilibrium between the pursuit of EU interests and the promotion of values;
- Ongoing concerns surrounding the exclusive nature provoked by EU bureaucracy and procedures;
- The need to enhance the role of civil society in the tripartite partnership (EU/Authorities/civil society). Issues of ownership should be well defined to ensure all parties are aware that all actors are part of the policy/partnership;

- Continuous and robust mechanisms for dialogues with civil society need to be established by enhancing national and regional dialogues; these should be structured, participatory and inclusive
- There was genuine appreciation among civil society attendees about the participation of the Institutional heads at the Forum. Their (HRVP, Commissioner, EP, EESC and CoR Presidents) presence and declarations sent a strong signal to attendees concerning the process so far, and its continuation, an important message following the perceived inactivity of seven months since the last activity in Naples. For civil society this offered a critical endorsement by the new EU regime of the initiative.
- Handover to civil society: Overwhelming call from civil society to assume ownership and management of this initiative, supported by the EU.
- Consultation of previous 18 months over. Now is the time for practical application.
- Strong message that Civil Society should have a real input into the ENP Review, and not just a token one.

### Operational follow-up:

1) It was agreed, following discussions between the Institutional Steering Group and the Core Advisory Group, following the offers by DG's Mingarelli and Danielsson, that an analysis/study of the compendium of recommendations from the 18-month consultation – with particular focus on the principles and activity clusters outlined in the Amman and Tunis conclusions – be launched as soon as possible. The objective of the study, to be completed within two months, is to gauge the feasibility of the creation of a civil society managed entity that would manage the regional dialogue mechanisms initiative. A comparative study/analysis of other models of managing partnerships/dialogues, including, as relevant, elements from the private and public sector, will be launched over the Summer.

2) The CSO Forum South will manage and execute this study, the findings of which will then be discussed between the IISG and the CAG. Based on the outcomes of those discussions a call for tender/proposals for the 'entity' will be launched.

3) IISG to decide on interim activities over the next 6-9 months.

4) IISG and CAG to meet and decide on constitution, representation, mandate and role of the CAG.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Civil Society Forum - Southern Neighbourhood**

*Brussels, 28-29 May, 2015*

### **Executive summary**

1. The second Southern Neighbourhood Civil Society Forum was the first meeting in the continuing civil society dialogue with EU Mediterranean stakeholders since the 2014 change in the Commission. It provided the opportunity to reinforce the commitment to making civil society an active partner in discussions on the EU's relations with the Southern Neighbourhood.

2. Over two days of plenary meetings and working groups more than 100 civil society participants and a few local authorities from the South had the opportunity to hear from HRVP Mogherini, Commissioner Hahn and EP President Schulz. Brussels based diplomatic representatives of Union for the Mediterranean partners and international organisations attended the plenary sessions.

3. The Forum was hosted at the premises of the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions whose respective Presidents - Mr. Henri Malosse and Mr. Markku Markkula – also made interventions and took questions. The opportunity for participants to discuss pertinent issues with key EU staff was completed by discussions with Mr. Christian Danielsson, Director General Neighbourhood and Enlargement, and Mr. Hughes Mingarelli, Managing Director European External Action Service at the closing plenary.

4. A key element in the Forum was discussion on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy. This was a topic in several of the plenaries and in three working groups on the second day, where different aspects of the review were considered by participants. The other working groups examined selected topics from 2014 meetings, identified by participants both as in need of action and suitable for a cooperative regional approach.

5. Participants came from the Neighbourhood South, from EU CSOs with relevant interests, from academic and think tank organisations with interests in EU-South or other relevant disciplines, and from media and professional communicators from both sides of the Mediterranean. While some were exposed to the dialogue process for the first time, many were repeat partners: this showed in conduct of discussions both within the programme and also in non-formal settings, illustrating how trust and capacity for cooperation can be built over multiple exercises. Severe air traffic problems on the day of arrival had an impact on participation, with the loss of a small number of participants who were unable to fly and others who arrived later than anticipated, but without heavily impacting the conduct of the Forum.

6. The main themes that emerged across the discussions, selected from the detailed reports that follow based on strong agreement being signalled, were:

- Need for greater understanding of the ENP, in its revised form, and the actions it will encompass.
- Greater involvement of the south, across governments and civil society, in planning policy actions.
- Framing of north-south relationships as true partners, not as aid donor/recipient dressed with the title 'partnership' for political reasons.
- Positive reaction to being asked to contribute to the ENP review, accompanied by the plea that civil society input should be listened to and not discarded in favour of reaching accord with governments.
- Civil society needs a role not just in the review but also in implementation and monitoring of consequent actions.
- The need to see EU policy reflecting a cohesive and coherent approach from Member States – not necessarily the case at the moment.
- Accepting that many of the key issues – economy and employment, migration and mobility, gender, youth unemployment, apathy and potential for radicalisation – are interlinked and need to be tackled in a frame that sees such links.



# Main report

## 1. Context

The initiative to create mechanisms for regional structured dialogue among and between civil society, authorities at different levels of government and the EU in the Southern Neighbourhood progressed through 2014 via a series of meetings of various sizes and in different locations up to the departure of Commissioner Füle in October. Inevitably the change of personnel that accompanied the appointment of a new Commission caused an interruption to external elements of the process, although the inter-institutional steering group for the process continued to meet and make plans for its continuation. The specific interest of the new HRVP Mogherini and of Commissioner Hahn in the process and their partnership in launching a review of the European Neighbourhood Policy brought new perspectives to the deliberations of the steering group; it was decided that staging a second Southern Neighbourhood Civil Society Forum would help bring these elements together and revive a process that might be seen by participants as having become stagnant.

Capturing outcomes from the process as it had been staged during 2013-14 was seen as essential, both to build on the conceptual resources developed through the previous discussions and to consolidate the formation of relationships and establishing of trust among participants. However, the ENP review offered an opportunity to put into practice the idea that EU officials value the opinion of civil society and so this was also built into the planning for the Forum and became a subject for plenary discussion as well as for one of the working group sessions.

A huge boost to the profile and ultimate success of the Forum was the willingness of high level officials to participate: HRVP Mogherini addressed the opening session; Commissioner Hahn addressed the plenary at the end of day one and took questions from the floor; EP President Schulz joined a panel of young participants to discuss the challenges of ensuring that young people on both sides of the Mediterranean can look forward to a promising future; and EESC and CoR Presidents jointly opened the Forum and took questions. DG NEAR Director General Danielsson and EEAS MD Mingarelli provided concluding statements and took questions.

All parts of the Forum were hosted at the joint premises of the EESC and CoR in Rue Beliard.

## 2. Format

The Forum was structured into several separate phases

- An opening plenary which included initial addresses from Mr. Henri Malosse, President European Economic and Social Committee and Mr. Markku Markkula, President European Committee of the Regions, plus a keynote address by Mme Federica Mogherini, High Representative for Common and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission.
- A technical briefing on how the working groups were to be conducted, supported by information on the ENP Review from representatives of Concord and ANND.
- A panel debate with EP President Schulz and young civil society representatives around the theme "Parallel Mediterranean experiences – common challenges and approaches to secure a better future for Youth"
- Working groups focused on themes brought forward from discussions in Tunis and Amman in 2014.
- A keynote address by Mr. Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, followed by discussion / questions & answers.
- Working groups focused on themes associated with the ENP Review.

- Presentation of the working group conclusions.
- Interventions from Mr. Christian Danielsson, Director General Neighbourhood and Enlargement, and Mr. Hughes Mingarelli, Managing Director European External Action Service, with questions and answers.

These phases were bracketed by meetings of the Core Advisory Group – individuals from various strata of civil society who have advised on the progress of the consultation - and representatives of the Inter-Institutional Steering Group: the first, on the evening before the Forum to set the scene and the second, after the close, to discuss outcomes and potential ways forward.

The moderation of both the plenary sessions and the working groups was managed by Forum participants: in the case of the plenaries, these were media professionals and those experienced in managing discussions. Each working group had a chair, rapporteur and facilitator drawn from participants, continuing the approach of allowing participants to run their own consultations and providing the element of ownership that has been stressed throughout. All these ‘officials’ were provided with written briefings on duties and context beforehand, though the travel disruption prevented direct group briefing of the sort delivered in previous events.

### **3. Participation**

Suggestions for participation were drawn from those who had taken part in previous meetings, supplemented by new participants proposed by members of the Inter-Institutional Steering Group. Because of the high profile given to the event by the various VIP speakers, the diplomatic community in Brussels and other relevant contacts were invited to the public sessions of the Forum (though not to the working groups which were held, as usual, in camera and under Chatham House rules). Overall participation was negatively affected by the inability of some to obtain a visa in the time available and by cancellation of some flights resulting from the Belgian air traffic problems on the day of arrival.

Participation mainly comprised:

- Members of European CSOs and relevant networks with interest and activities in the South.
- Members of Southern CSOs and relevant networks, including members of youth organisations in the South.
- Members of ARLEM (the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly) from Mediterranean partner countries.
- Participants from academic and think tank backgrounds with an interest in the South, in civil society activity or training in dialogue.
- Media and other communication experts, North and South.
- Local members of the diplomatic community or other relevant interests invited to hear the VIP speakers.

As with previous events, many of those who participated have the capacity to multiply their information and reactions to peers across the region, so the full exposure of the speeches and the debates can be expected to be many times the number present in Brussels.

### **4. Working group philosophy**

Two different sets of working groups were built into the Forum agenda. The first picked up key themes from 2014 discussions grouped under the heading Amman conclusions: these covered issues associated with

inequalities in the region, the shrinking spaces for civil society, and mobility. The second session took key themes from the ENP review: the focus of the policy, the potential for differentiation and flexibility in its application, and how to ensure its visibility and ownership by civil society.

All groups had a chair, rapporteur and facilitator appointed from within their participation, to ensure ownership and management by civil society. Participants were assigned to groups to ensure there was no imbalance in numbers. For the Amman conclusions discussions, participants were segregated to ensure balance of geography, gender and organisation type across the three groups. The ENP review discussion groups were segregated differently so that the background and current activity of participants matched the topic and level of discussion for the group: the group discussing possible differentiation was mainly those with an international remit who could consider how different countries might need different approaches; those with more national concerns were in the group discussing focus and those with media and academic context discussed visibility and ownership.

The rapporteurs provided summaries on the discussions in plenary at the end of the Forum and longer reports afterwards for inclusion in the overall report.

## **5. Outcomes**

Full rapporteur reports for the working groups are provided in the annex but are summarised here along with summaries of speeches and question and answer sessions.

### **Opening plenary – Addresses by HRVP Mogherini and President EESC Malosse and President CoR Markkula**

*Initial welcoming addresses from Mr. Henri Malosse, President European Economic and Social Committee and Mr. Markku Markkula, President European Committee of the Regions, plus a keynote address by Mrs. Federica Mogherini, High Representative and Vice President of the European Commission.*

The welcoming addresses emphasised how Mediterranean cooperation had faltered in its objectives in recent years and the need for the neighbourhood policy to be reviewed to stimulate real cooperation, with South-South exchanges as well as the South-North ones. It was said that principles of solidarity and shared responsibility should be actively supported by all governments, especially in the fight against radicalization all around the Mediterranean.

EESC President Mr Malosse stated that the role of civil society in the political dialogue was of vital importance as illustrated by the example of Tunisia. He indicated the importance of the southern neighbourhood for Europe and underlined the need to include civil society in the decision making process in an organised and structured way to ensure that civil society as a whole is represented.

CoR President Mr Markkula welcomed this initiative to promote a better understanding of how civil society and local and regional authorities could benefit from each other in creating dialogue and opportunities for a better future. He insisted that the ENP reform should adapt a territorial approach based on the principles of subsidiarity and multilevel governance. Concerning migration, the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility needed to be actively applied by all levels of government.

HRVP Mogherini also stressed the need for partnership and cooperation, around and inside the European Union. Common issues of high unemployment, lack of trust in institutions, struggling civil society, and youth disaffection and disenchantment help nurture radicalization as people look for a role in their society. The aspirations of young people, especially women, must be recognised and supported, both among those who have lived through stolen revolutions and in a Europe of economic and social difficulties. Repression is not a

cure against radicalisation; democratic environments are needed. We cannot afford to lose the fight for our young people.

As the space for open discussion appears to be shrinking, it is essential to have civil society as part of the dialogue. A change in approach offers the opportunity now to work with civil society, not just on the ENP review but on many of the region's problems. Ways must be found to keep civil society at the political table: regional dialogue and cooperation must be promoted beyond the bilateral level and this Forum can be an element of coming together and learning from each other.

The discussion that followed highlighted three topics that became key issues throughout the Forum:

- The need to balance security matters against the continued commitment to – and struggle for – personal freedoms, including freedom of expression.
- The need to tackle the increasing problem of radicalisation in the region.
- The question of refugees and the problems arising – north and south - from enforced and economic migration.

Additional factors contributing to these issues, and potential paths of action in response, were offered both by panel members and the participants:

- Employment, especially for the young, is a major problem on both sides of the Mediterranean and needs to be tackled both for economic reasons and also because of its potential as a spur to radicalisation.
- Gender equality still requires much work, although there is considerable experience amassed from previous work on such issues in the south that should not be ignored.
- The Palestinian question continues to poison so many topics and approaches to dealing with them that it must remain a priority.
- Changes in the EU approach to the south might be needed not just in terms of mechanisms but also in terms of perspectives, as in possibly seeing security as a Mediterranean issue not a national one.

The EU and its Member States were asked to take care in their approaches to national governments in the south, acknowledging that application of agreed policy was often selective and should not be moderated where economic interest might benefit from softer attitudes. Both Mr Makkula and Mr Malosse agreed that there should be consistency in approaches to key issues, even within Member States as well as in relations with the south. They also accepted that not all issues were perfect in the north but that did not negate the value of the lessons that experience offered nor of the structures for cooperation that both their organisations had developed over the years.

### **Panel debate on Youth with presence of EP President Schulz**

*EP President Schulz joined by the Anna Lindh Director Hatem Atallah and civil society representatives to discuss the theme "Parallel Mediterranean experiences – common challenges and approaches to secure a better future for Youth"*

President Schulz stressed the position of civil society safeguarding democracy and the potential for regional cooperation and dialogue in this respect. His view that 95% of decisions made today affect the next generation points up the very high degree of responsibility: while it is not a sin to be an old man and it is not a privilege to be young, the same is true in reverse.

Contributions from panellists and from the floor offered insights to the needs of the young in several areas:

- The potential for 'youth' to become a political term that frames policies is not necessarily always positive: applying the label 'youth' can be used as a way of disenfranchising, a way of justifying lesser

rights, or even of giving benefits at the expense of some other group. Successful campaigns for youth show that a selected issue is universal.

- Chronic youth apathy is affecting all sectors and playing major roles in destabilising the region and promoting radicalisation and extremism. It also has consequences for political engagement and economic development.
- Make change possible: doing this may mean questioning one's own position and even preparing to give up elements of one's own interest. Change can also come from civil society, not just politicians and institutions.
- New tools and innovative methodologies are needed to revive youth energy and provide tangible results. Utilising the creative brains of the young and the expanding cyberspace can create a new era of activism that is sustainable and grassroots-oriented.
- Mobility must be meaningful: if mobility is considered merely as job-seeking it will be perceived as a threat by people in destination countries. But mobility is not just about jobs and economic growth, it is about creating positive things together. Those who are mobile need to be allowed, and encouraged, to contribute socially, economically and culturally to the places they go to.
- Social enterprises may offer a possible future for CSOs.
- The Anna Lindh Foundation was acknowledged as creating space for dialogue, learning and sharing experiences. The key is to give people the possibility to be part of the solution, rather than to feel as the victims.

### **Keynote address by Commissioner Hahn**

*Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, followed by discussion / questions & answers.*

The Commissioner depicted civil society as a major player in development. Most democracies function when civil society operates freely. Increased freedom, human rights and respect of law are essential and a government's long time stability is best when open to public debate. The EU will always see the need to engage with civil society, hence current increases in funding for actions in 2014-17.

Employment is a main objective north and south. Education and training must play a central role in building strong economy: they are also an antidote to radicalisation.

Discussion from the floor highlighted:

- Concerns over commitment with governments in the south and commitment to support civil society, with requests for greater reaction to violations against civil society; plus parallel dialogues that never meet (EU-Governments, EU-Civil Society) when a triangular partnership with results is sought.
- Seeming lack of a united policy in Europe for the immigrants arriving on EU shores
- Need for increased support for women across all policy areas
- Need to support media networking and cooperation in a practical way as a driver for democracy.
- Education and research should be considered as more than a tool, as something essential. Research should create positive circulation of expertise: brain circulation and not brain drain.

The Commissioner admitted that no-one has all the answers while stressing the importance of the EU as a major donor and as a guarantor of civil society and human rights in the region. The ENP review is a major opportunity to make sure that the voice of civil society is heard when making policies: representatives of civil society should step in and contribute to the policy.

### **Closing plenary: working groups conclusions and discussions**

*Mr. Christian Danielsson, Director General Neighbourhood and Enlargement, and Mr. Hughes Mingarelli, Managing Director European External Action Service, following summaries of the working groups.*

Both speakers reiterated the commitment to civil society as a key partner in north-south relations and as input to the ENP review – forming, framing and implementing. Both also reinforced the importance of regional perspectives as complementary to other levels of action. There is commitment to helping establish the capacity to continue the consultation and making input in a more structured manner – and ensuring that the EU listens more.

In the discussion that followed, there was focus on several aspects discussed in the working groups:

- The need to place common ‘values’ at the heart of discussions, complementing established views on fundamental rights; the capacity of administrations to resist the spread of accepted values and of corporate interests to ignore them – in both instances for their own interests – needs to be tackled.
- Economic reform is often seen as critical but in some cases, for example banking reform, is dependent on initial political reform to ensure it can be made to function; achieving economic reform cannot be allowed at the expense of human rights.
- The occasional lack of coherence among EU member States and between EU views and the action of its Member States must be recognised as potentially negative. The resources available to the EU to achieve positive change are often in competition with resources from individual countries that are used in ways counter-productive to EU aims.
- Media freedom is in even greater need of support in some countries, with journalists intimidated and imprisoned. The changes in the south have highlighted the importance of community media, free of interference by administrations and their supporters.
- Cultural matters have become even more important recently; the EU was asked to take a stand against the destruction taking place in some countries.

Prior to input from Mr Danielsson and Mr Mingarelli, and the questions and answers session, summary reports were heard from the working groups. (Full reports from the groups can be found in the Annex.)

#### **1. Working groups focused on themes brought forward from discussions in Tunis and Amman in 2014.**

- Working Group A – Inequalities in the Mediterranean Region - the group considered all areas of inequality and the role of both the EU and individual governments in the south in seeking a solution. Civil society should be engaged with these two and bring its own perspectives and ideas for action.
- Working Group B – Shrinking space for Civil Society - the group considered several aspects as needing focus but noted that the EU was often pulled in different directions when attempting to tackle them. The group looked to the dialogue process being given more definite structure and timing so that regional cooperation and support could be progressed.
- Working Group C – Issues of mobility in the Mediterranean – the group suggested that mobility/migration might become the defining characteristic of north-south relations in the immediate future. The subject is multi-faceted and feeds from and into other issues (economy and employment, youth apathy and radicalisation, security, and social cohesion – north and south) and so needs comprehensive and united action across all fronts, with civil society as a partner.

#### **2. Working groups focused on themes associated with the ENP Review.**

- Working Group A – Focus – the group saw so many areas that needed action it was difficult to speak in terms of focus and priority. Gender and youth issues were highlighted in discussion that saw human

rights as underpinning much of what needs to be done. Economic development was seen as important but necessarily in an inclusive approach. The need for civil society to act both as partner and as monitor of progress was stressed.

- Working Group B – Differentiation and Flexibility – the group supported the need for overhaul of the ENP, with development of the capacity of civil society in the region as an important aspect. Current ENP instruments have lost credibility in many areas and either need to be implemented as intended or replaced. There should be focus on the needs of specific sectors of society alongside attention paid to relations with administrations.
- Working Group C – Ownership and Visibility – the group acknowledged the need for greater visibility for north-south cooperation and also a wish to see a redefinition of the relationship. Ownership by partner countries and by civil society needs to be based on a sense of true partnership not a donor-recipient relationship. The roles of continued dialogue and of the media in reframing the approach are crucial.

### **Core Advisory Group discussion**

The core advisory group brought a dual perspective to its deliberations at the end of the Forum. Positive comments were made about the attendance of so many high level speakers, their common commitment to further involvement with civil society, and the suggestions that concrete steps were planned to ensure the continuation of the dialogue process the group had advised on over the previous 18 months. At the same time there were critical comments about the organisation of the Forum, particularly that information had been very late in arriving and that there had been no real opportunity for consultation on the proposed content. The lack of communication after the meeting in Naples in October 2014 followed by what appeared extreme haste in making the Forum happen was seen as negative. The Core Group felt that lack of involvement had prevented them playing their role.

It was suggested that the dissatisfaction with the process reflected the administrative structuring of the dialogue to date as a series of separate meetings, meaning that there was little in the way of liaison between specific events. The advisory group had anticipated after Naples that some form of activity would overcome these failings and the lack of such development was seen as disappointing.

A potential example of achieving greater continuity was offered in a presentation from the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum secretariat about the work done to provide a cohesive information and coordination service. Detailed questions and answers produced a generally - though not universally - positive response to the idea that such a secretariat or similar platform might have a role to play in improving the dialogue with the southern neighbourhood. It was agreed that investigation of how such a secretariat, or elements of it, might be used to support future activities would be beneficial. DG NEAR suggested that research be done into this possibility, alongside consideration of whether there were other options and even whether there were existing channels that might dispense with the need for a new support structure. Members of the advisory group indicated their desire to be consulted as part of this work and ensure evolution of what has gone before: this is essential to do justice to the efforts made in previous meetings and to preserve the concept of dialogue that is listened to and acted on. Continuation of the themes of the meetings, along with the activity clusters, to date – specifically the Tunis and Amman outcomes – should form part of any structured move forward and not be simply abandoned as an earlier phase of dialogue.

The core advisory echoed participants during the Forum in reiterating the question of when the leadership of the dialogue mechanism would be placed in civil society hands.

DG NEAR and EEAS said they would take the outcome of this discussion to a Steering Group meeting in the coming days with a view to starting an assessment of the feasibility of such proposals at the earliest opportunity. The technical assistance of the Civil Society Facility South, having the ability to mobilise short-term experts in a short time to undertake that job, will be mobilised with the aim to have the results of this feasibility assessment by the end of summer. Information on progress would be shared with the advisory group at all stages, with their input/advice sought on the terms of the assessment and the follow-up to its results.



## **Annex 1: Rapporteur reports**

### **A.- Working groups focused on themes associated with Tunis & Amman conclusions**

#### *Working Group A – Inequalities in the Mediterranean Region*

The meeting started by reading the summary of the Amman discussions 2014 on the theme of inequalities: conclusions from this stated that tackling inequality demands a comprehensive approach, including the interrelation between effective political participation, full and active citizenship, economic, social and cultural justice and sustainability. Issues related to inequality start with political and institutional reform, including respect for individual and collective freedoms and enhanced participation. Tackling inequality also requires the adoption of economic and social policies leading to justice, enhancing cultural exchange and promoting dialogue, as well as policies related to the sustainability.

The group entered into a very healthy discussion, heated on occasions, and focused on the following topics:

1. The need to find common ground on key issues related to the understanding of the state and causes of inequalities in the Mediterranean region; the role of civil society in examining the equality gap at national level and amongst the EU and non-EU countries in the Mediterranean region; and how the ENP could contribute to reduce such gaps through new approaches to cooperation.
2. The interrelation between human rights and economics: there is a need for a comprehensive approach to human rights with focus on the socio-economic and cultural rights. Unemployment remains a key matter to be addressed. There is a critical need to implement concrete socio-economic measures for citizens and improve working conditions. Such measures can also be determined by the civil society after a national and regional consultation.
3. Women's rights and gender equality: gender equality should be mainstreamed throughout all the steps regarding all issues including inequalities.
4. Tackling inequalities: it was agreed amongst participants that addressing inequalities is also the responsibility of both EU and the governments in the region. The EU should encourage investment in the southern Mediterranean region and support technical and vocational training while governments engage in effective economic reforms of key sectors such as trade and the banking system.
5. Youth: there is a need to revisit the educational system and create better opportunities for young people as key actors when tackling inequalities and with a full EU support.
6. Relationships between EU and southern Mediterranean countries: a unified and coherent EU policy is critically needed to be established and implemented. Such policies will address the barriers to equality in the entire region including the relationship between citizens of the EU and non-EU countries; and review the EU's relationship with countries with poor records of human rights. Also the EU aid needs to adjust its capital per person in the southern Mediterranean countries in order to align its aid in the region for a healthy relationship between all parties in the region. Decentralisation of EU co-operation across the Mediterranean was proposed for more and effective inclusion of civil society.
7. Bilateral relationships: the EU needs to clear tension between governments as this is the only way to have a regional unified policy to tackle collectively the issue of inequality.

8. The role of civil society: civil society needs to take a leading role in monitoring the impact of the EU actions in relation to governments' commitment to address inequalities and follow-up steps.

9. EU's vision for the region: participants agreed that the EU's vision for the Mediterranean region should shift to one that sees the southern Mediterranean region as an equal EU partner and a basis for potential partnership and opportunity for development rather than a place of instabilities and problems only.

The meeting concluded by suggesting the following:

1. Hold national conferences/consultations with all stakeholders to discuss and agree on real challenges to equality in the respective countries. These challenges will be presented to and discussed with the EU. The key objectives of the national consultations are:

2. To identify the gaps in relation to inequalities in the government policies including the EU regional policies.

3. To set the ground for a dialogue based on peoples' expectations and the will of the EU and governments to address the identified inequality gaps, taking into consideration the framework as provided above. A regional discussion should follow.

#### Working Group B – Shrinking space for Civil Society

It was decided that key questions to be addressed in the continuing dialogue, moving forward from the Amman conclusions, were around the following issues:

- Legal space: what is actually permitted versus what are considered acceptable norms.
- Media: how media needs its own space to allow it to be a monitor of the space accorded to others.
- Corporate governance: civil society's role as guardian of good governance.
- Security and freedom: negotiating the balance between the two and ensuring that security is not used as an excuse for curtailing freedoms.

These issues are seen as subject to certain tensions in the interventions made by the EU:

- The comparative weakness of political will of the EU as a whole; individual member states seemingly follow a much more direct strategy, sometimes out of line with what the EU is saying.
- The lack of consistency that arises when a four-year strategy is pursued while pressing issues arise that need reaction: how to keep a strategic approach with specified goals yet to ensure that the realities on the ground are not ignored.

Recommendations were agreed on how the dialogue process, moving forward from 2014, the Amman and Tunis conclusions, can progress to support the EU, both in continuing to make input to policy discussions and also in actions at regional level to bring about cooperation that could lead to change:

- Set a clear timeline for the dialogue process so that participants know what is happening, going to happen and what other planning will be carried out.
- Create a management function/secretariat with a clear mandate for operation the dialogue and support to allow its actions to be professionally organised.
- Have a clear agenda around the most pressing priorities within the region that are seen as suitable for regional dialogue and cooperation.
- Create small independent commissions on each theme/issue, possibly by regional by cluster (Maghreb/Levant) to establish share of information, ideas and practices
- Bring together a complete list of best practices from the EU funded projects in the different countries so that the value of the investment in them is increased.
- Select a list of best national projects and upscale them to the regional level.

- Include other EU institutions in the dialogue according to their interest and their capacity to maximise effects - UfM/EIB/EBDR were mentioned, others can be suggested.
- Maintain the momentum regained by the Forum by providing a quick answer from the EU team about the next steps and the timeline of these developments.

### Working Group C – Issues of mobility in the Mediterranean

The discussions on mobility issues were broad and occasionally passionate. One of the most striking statements from the audience was that migration is *the* issue upon which the future credibility of ENP will be judged. Some of the comments were directed more towards ENP rather than migration issues *per se*. These can be summarised as follows:

- The ENP review process represents a golden opportunity to take on board fresh perspectives and concerns about the current state of the policy;
- ENP has to develop from a ‘donor’ relationship to one that is genuinely ‘joint ownership’;
- EU Member States appear to be inadequately involved and their actions can even be counter-productive (especially on the emotive issues of migration and boat-people);
- ENP Action Plans are predominantly written by the EU, with a lesser role played by the neighbourhood country in question. This should be changed to a more inclusive process and it should include representatives of civil society in the drafting process (local universities and think tanks might also be usefully involved);
- At the heart of the policy is an issue of trust and credibility in the EU and its members.

On the more specific issues surrounding mobility the main issues for attention identified by the group were as follows:

- Issues of mobility should not be approached in the first instance as policy questions – they are, at root, questions of human rights and dignity;
- The issue of mobility throughout the Southern Mediterranean is primarily a YOUTH problem, given the demographics of the region (with around 60% of the combined populations under the age of 30). If not addressed properly, the movement of young people may pose problems for individual countries (brain-drain) or, conversely, enormous social problems with mass unemployment of young people that the EU itself is only just beginning to comprehend, based largely on the experiences in Greece, Italy and Spain;
- The context for any discussions on mobility is important, this includes: the legal background and the relevant international conventions; social factors that impact upon mobility such as demographics (strikingly 33,000 Syrians were born in refugee camps in Syria over three years), employment, health and education since they can all be push/pull factors in mobility; it should also include a more thorough analysis of how conflict in (Iraq and Syria as obvious examples) and beyond the region (CAR, Mali and Nigeria for example) impact upon the movement of people;
- Many countries in the Southern Mediterranean have porous or badly monitored borders which only exacerbates the issue of ENP (South) countries being used as transit countries for refugees fleeing from sub-Saharan Africa – more attention and assistance should be directed towards border assistance;
- The predominant EU-ENP relationship is one-way and often lacks the character of a genuine partnership when it comes to visa facilitation or readmission agreements;

- Visa facilitation needs to be vastly improved: it remains difficult to obtain visas (some people were unable to attend the Forum due to inadequate time between notice of the event and invitations being dispatched);
- The distinction made at a previous meeting (Amman II) between 'voluntary' and 'involuntary' migration is no longer that relevant, especially as the motives for movement are often mixed in nature and require too much subjectivity;
- On the burning issue of refugees there should be a comprehensive action plan that actually addresses the scale of the challenge (4 million refugees is not 'business as usual' and the response of the Member States to take up to 20,000 migrants illustrates the scale of the disjuncture);
- The current reactions to the situation in the Mediterranean threatens to replicate Australian policies (i.e. 'push-back') and too often matters of asylum and migration are not addressed holistically looking at the situation in the surrounding countries, the social perspectives or the needs of the EU itself for skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled migrants;
- The notion of 'humanitarian corridors' across the sea should be explored and search and rescue operations should be seen (and paid for) as humanitarian operations. When it comes to illegal migration the Southern Mediterranean is often the conduit for immigration (and often asylum) from sub-Saharan Africa which implies that the EU should focus far more of its political dialogue with these countries on migration issues;
- There is an urgent need for more attention on migration issues within the EU and this could include conspicuous programmes/media/social media campaigns to make the benefits of migration visible within the EU and to build alliances with business, education and health services. It was noted that media attention in the EU tends to dwell upon immediate problems (like the boat-people) to the detriment of any longer-term perspective on mobility;
- Mobility is often seen in a South-North perspective, but this tends to underestimate the important South-South dimensions of movement;
- More attention needs to be paid to feminist perspectives in mobility since there are particular burdens (and dangers) that fall upon women;
- Some aspects of the EU's mobility policies were deemed positive (ERASMUS+ was mentioned frequently) and many saw education as a key component of mobility. It was noted, however, that educational exchange is pre-dominantly one way and affects a relatively small number of people. ERASMUS+ could usefully be expanded, but as part of a more general approach to assisting with youth unemployment and job opportunities in the region. If such programmes are not put in an holistic perspective they risk exacerbating the problem (either by highly educated people leaving or increasing frustration when (meaningful) jobs are not available).

## **B.- Working groups focused on themes associated with the ENP Review**

### Working Group A – Focus

#### **1. Discussion about proposed areas of Focus**

Participants questioned whether the benefit of the ENP review is focused on geopolitical stability or human rights and how different actors engage in bilateral discussion. While economic development is important this should support inclusive growth. Civil society should ensure that trade is fair and economic development creates growth with positive impact on society. The discussion should not be just on economic development but on sustainability, respect for human rights and social cohesion. In this, participants highlighted:

- Gender issues: focus on gender equality, women’s rights and economic, social, political and civil participation of women - adopting a gender mainstreaming approach.
- Need to support youth from southern neighborhood, ensuring the presence of youth policies along with an implementation framework.
- The fight against corruption (political corruption, executive corruption, accessibility to information); good governance, local governance, transparency, and support for CSO participation in governance and policy making and democratic transition.
- Disparity between rural and urban cities, desertification, biodiversity. Partnerships should integrate global development strategies like such as sustainable development goals, climate change.
- Freedom of association, media, expression and internet freedom and rights of minorities should be supported.
- Better definition of migration, circular migration and mobility. Integration of migrants in society and people trafficking should be considered
- Security threats, including which security: for individuals or border security. Full coherence in security and safety among UE and member states needs to be assured.
- Addition of themes corresponding to new challenges: water, innovation, sustainable territorial development, medium and small enterprise investment, partnership and decentralised cooperation; also diversity and culture protection (cultural heritage should be protected, criminalisation of the destruction and theft of property).

The participants see so many priorities that the concept of priority is difficult to define.

#### **2. Approaches and tools**

Participants proposed the following approaches:

- Sustainability as cross section.
- Adopting a gender and youth mainstream approach.
- Negotiation should be done in each country with civil society and government.
- Not to continue the support logic, but partnership
- Inclusive, participative and multilateral approach.
- Local strategies should be translated into Arabic to make them accessible to civil society.

- Transfer of technologies that help in development.
- Collaboration with CSO's for implementation.

#### Implementation tools:

- Put in place a good practice code for civil society contribution (consultation online and offline) including negotiation process participation.
- Use EU guidelines (human rights, security, women, peace) and implement.
- Strategy and plan of implementation with indicators.
- Enabling legal environment national and regional and measures to solve conflict and implement the plan.
- Facilitator mechanism like dialogue platform governed by civil society actors (independent, efficient, accessibility, inclusiveness)
- CSO capacity building for contribution in implementation.

#### Monitoring tools

- Common information and accessible tool.
- Revising the green line regulation to be fairer and ensure there is no misuse/corruption at different levels.
- Equality, transparency, anticorruption tool and good governance tools (indicators, process, strategy)
- Focusing on the media as a tool (board of trustees in media).

#### Evaluation tools

- Put in place evaluating process and indicators on impact
- Put in place a barometer of policy implementation
- Wellbeing tool (education, health, quality of environment, income, social integration, employment, dignity).

### Working Group B – Differentiation and Flexibility

#### **I. Differentiation and conditionality:**

- Role of CSOs: CSOs can play a key role in assessing the human rights situation, for instance on the occasion of elections. NGO shadow reports can bring a different angle as there might be a gap between the EU's assessment and the NGO vision. In the same spirit, when it comes to the 'more for more principle', the key question is: who evaluates? This shouldn't only be done bilaterally between the EU and its partner country, but rather include a third party that can only be civil society.
- The 'more for more' policy is not applicable to all countries; it works for countries like Tunisia and Morocco. More incentives must be found, other than 'money, market and mobility'. A 'less for less' principle should be applied to authoritarian regimes such as Egypt, provided that this does not impact the population negatively. However, since Egypt does not care too much about EU funding, EU (political) support should go through civil society while making sure their representatives do not face reprisals.
- In order for civil society to get more space for its activities, the ENP should aim at developing civil society's capacity to increase contacts with the EU institutions and Member States and providing CSOs with visibility for their legitimate activities, e.g. through exchange of good practices and visibility in the media.

## II. Crisis Management:

- The ENP should address the root causes of conflicts; in the meantime it should actively support refugees and migrants. A comprehensive action plan is needed for dealing with the refugee issue in Jordan and Lebanon.
- ENP as a 'soft power' mechanism should treat the negative effects of conflicts, e.g. refugee protection, legal status and resettlement in the EU. There is a risk of mixing soft power and hard power (Security and Defence Policy), the current security approach to migration is a good example of that, leading to criminalising migration.
- A regional approach is needed, while increasing the diplomatic pressure by the EU and its Member States on the bilateral level. The ENP should start with the Maghreb to secure Tunisia, which is facing tough challenges relating to the conflict in Libya.
- Individuals and groups should be supported as building blocks for the future, with a focus on human rights activists and democracy promoters living in remote areas.
- The youth, in particular, should be supported through job creation, and the EU should provide aid for vulnerable groups, e.g. elderly people, people with disabilities, women, as well as healthcare facilities in areas where tensions may arise between refugees fleeing wars and local populations.

## III. Instruments:

- The ENP should go back to the spirit of the Barcelona Declaration with a regional approach to meet challenges that are essentially regional, e.g. migration, trade, energy, environment, transport, etc. This could start with supporting a sub-regional integration of Maghreb - despite the current difficulties. Promoting south-south cooperation could initiate more pragmatic and flexible dynamics.
- The ENP should target civil society in general, including trade unions, groups working outside the capitals, and not just EU partners, i.e. those receiving money via EU-funded projects.
- There is a gap between the ENP Action Plans and their actual implementation, which leads to a lack of trust in EU instruments. The Action Plans are too standardised and theoretical. The ENP instruments must therefore be differentiated, and the EU shouldn't turn a blind eye to the situation in Egypt and Israel - in those cases, the Action Plans are fictitious and meaningless.
- The EU should primarily support a country like Tunisia, to be considered as a lever for the whole region. Tunisia could be included in the European Structural Funds, e.g. FEDER.
- There is no systematic EU policy as regards information and follow-up on the funding conventions between the EU and partner countries. These are not publicised and no feedback is provided to CSOs, most probably due to the fact the EU fears the partners' negative reactions.
- Rather than inventing new instruments, the EU should first implement what it already has, such as the EU Guidelines on human rights.

### Working Group C – Ownership and Visibility

This working group focused on how to strengthen ownership of the ENP by partner countries and how to increase awareness of the policy's aims and impact, both within the EU and in the partner countries. Several dimensions of the current policy status and future needs were assessed. Questions extracted from the ENP review launch document were tackled and the majority of the group members suggested that more can be

done re the cooperation and partnership of the EU with neighbourhood countries. Main topics discussed were those related to knowledge policy, partnership issues, political aims, ownership and dialogue among all members.

### **Comments/discussion**

A number of perspectives emerged in the general discussion; main key points concentrated on topics related to media, visibility, ownership, implementation of funded projects, and others:

- General difference between ownership and visibility: ownership seen as result not a process;
- Great advantage of visibility is transparency itself;
- Review process of ENP is well conceived and it is an invitation to speak out loud;
- Challenges tackled must take into account but also cooperate with the neighbours of the neighbours;
- Widen the integration of the civil society including those with Islamic perspectives;
- Intervention of media is affecting the role of coherent outcome of the ENP;
- Role of media divided into two: coherence of actors and successful outcomes;
- Problems faced by media: big portion of employees working in media sector don't have academic background;
- Suggestion to directly ask the south neighbourhood: "what kind of interest do you have?";
- Final agenda should be co- owned by all parties involved;
- Member States: focusing attention should be sufficient to bring change to neighbourhood countries;
- Difficulties faced while seeing EU as only donors and not as partners;
- Visibility during the implementation of the EU projects in the South neighbourhood contributes a lot to the integrity that participants gain (they feel safe and that increases their desire to cooperate);
- Suggestion to review the entire process of ownership and visibility at an early point;
- Feelings from the Southern neighbourhood that they are being used and not treated as partners;
- Solutions could be political not necessarily financial assistance;
- The use of the EU logo on publications and docs of the related project supports the reliability of the outcomes however in some other neighbourhood countries the logo usage has a different impact;
- Visibility of the ENP has a negative input on themes related to migration and mobility;
- Media is more interested in numbers; total amount of budget allocated rather than concentrating on project activities and outcomes;
- Lack of diplomatic approaches with the partners;
- Visibility is too focused on the use of logo, colours, fonts, formats, etc.
- Top priority themes needed to be tackled: youth empowerment, awareness on anti-corruption projects, inequality, public reform and more concentration on productive sectors;
- Suggestion to shorten the time frame of the projects at implementation level;
- Need for more awareness on policy within EU Member States (worries about amount of paid taxes);
- Concentrating more on building good relations with media in general and journalists in specific.

### **Conclusions**

A brief summary of the discussion and main points decided were provided at the plenary session subsequently after the meeting of the group members:

- Knowledge of the policy: there is still lack of awareness of ENP in partner countries.



- Partnership issues: there are many examples of people not seeing it as a partnership but it was impossible to ignore the role of the EU as a social fund. Partnership is a diplomatic way to cover the situation.
- Cooperative structure of the ENP: members of the group suggested that more can be done to listen to partners' priorities and that civil society should also contribute to set the priorities.
- Aid assistance: several members of the group pointed to the need to be realistic about the neighbourhood policy and to recognise that is a political initiative rather than purely aid.
- Ownership: there was strong support for initiative in which partnership was genuine as in the case of the media dialogue set up on Euromed. This could improve visibility and give feedback about how much ownership was being achieved.
- Long term objectives: the discussion on ownership recognised that it was a major problem and participants of this group felt that setting clear priorities working for the long term and building dialogue were critical to improving the situation.

## **ANNEX 2**

### **Address**

#### **Delivered by HRVP Federica Mogherini**

Firstly let me thank Presidents Malosse and Markkula for their presence on the podium with me today, and also for offering these impressive premises for our important discussions with you over the next two days.

It is great to see so many civil society members here today, and among you so many young activists. When I was a student, I started getting involved in the public sphere through some civil society organisations and their campaigns. As a politician I have always tried to keep in touch with your world and your passion. I feel a strong connection to your activities and the challenges you face, and I really believe you can bring a fundamental contribution to the public debate and the democracy of our countries.

That is even more true in times like these, when so many peoples on the Southern and the Eastern shore of the Mediterranean are faced with war, terrorism, massive displacement. And even in the countries that are currently living in peace, the social and economic challenges are huge: alarmingly high youth unemployment, lack of trust in all established institutions, shrinking spaces for civil society.

All these circumstances make the radicalisation of our youth so much easier: terrorist groups such as Da'esh hunger for estranged youngsters, aiming to turn them into warriors through their vicious propaganda. It is a battle for hearts and minds, but also a battle to tackle the root causes of disaffection and disenchantment.

We cannot forget the aspirations of those who have fought for reform, justice and dignity; those who have lived through stolen revolutions and still live in fear; those who flee from conflict, repression and threats to their lives.

There are so many young people who just ask for a place in their societies. They ask for an opportunity to be listened to and to contribute. They ask to be part of a bigger something.

Some believe countering extremism requires repression and fear. It is in fact the exact opposite: in the long run a democratic environment and a lively civil society are the only cure for extremism. And I believe this works on both sides of the Mediterranean.

We cannot afford to lose the fight for our youth. Education will be crucial – there is nothing the terrorists fear more than education. Reducing unemployment will also be crucial. Improving the quality of our democracies will be crucial. If we fail our youth, the fight will be lost. But if our youth is with us, if we manage to turn the disenchanting back into a citizen, extremism will not prevail.

This is one of the reasons why Europe supports state building, reform and all the efforts towards sustainable social and economic development in its neighbourhood. It is our way to be a responsible power at our doorstep. A power that believes in cooperation, not in supremacy. We need our partners to be strong, so we can face our common challenges together. This calls for effective and democratic state institutions, but also for a free and healthy civil society.

We know that the context you work in is far from ideal, and even getting worse. We see the continually shrinking space for civil society to manoeuvre; we see the growth of inequalities and the widening gap in opportunities.

The task is hard, but you should know you can count on us during the journey. The EU will continue to increase its support to civil society in the Southern Neighbourhood and strive to make civil society actors and organisations more effective in advocacy and dialogue.

In addition, we are aiming at more targeted support measures for citizens of neighbourhood countries willing to improve their knowledge of Europe, such as improving the conditions for youth, academics, and professionals to live and study for a short period in the EU.

I will ensure that civil society is present, and a part of, the different dialogues between Europe and the neighbouring countries, and that those relationships are based on fairness, equal participation and transparency. We want a relationship that puts people at the heart of the policy agenda, as it projects our joint values and interests. You will have a seat at the political table. You have a right to be part of discussions that ultimately will have an effect on your lives and livelihoods.

And we would like you to contribute to the way the European Union approaches your part of the world. You certainly know we are currently going through the process of reviewing our Neighbourhood Policy. Our current strategy towards the region on our doorstep was adopted ten years ago. We live in a totally different world today, and unfortunately it is still a world of conflicts, refugees, terrorism, and despair.

Our tools need to be updated. Our approach needs to focus not just on the present reality, but to the future. Today's meeting matters a lot to us: we are currently consulting with EU Member States and Southern partners on this Policy review, but our enquiry would be incomplete without you, civil society organisations. Your voice does matter; it will count and contribute to this review.

We intend to work with you in a more direct and concrete way. Our Delegations abroad have already strengthened their outreach to local civil society actors in the context of the ongoing consultations on the neighbourhood policy review.

I know our partners often perceive the EU as bureaucratic, sometimes prescriptive and paternalistic. They are mostly right. But our approach is changing. Our cooperation now will be based on flexibility, joint ownership, strategic partnership, mutual benefit and inter-dependence. And if you think this jargon is still a bit obscure, let me put it down more clearly: this is not about the EU taking decisions and imposing them on you. It is not about telling you what you should or should not do. It is about doing things together. We are your partner, not your boss.

We hold your independence in high regard. Civil society organisations play an important role in monitoring and giving advice to parliaments, governments and political parties on issues of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including holding authorities to account for their actions.

I know you are often confronted with attempts to portray internal debate and democratic dissent as a source of instability. This narrative needs to be reversed: a functioning public sphere can be a safeguard against conflict and a guarantee for state institutions. Governments need to engage with civil society to help ensure that reform programmes both reflect and have the support of society at large.

This is why we are encouraging countries to establish a regular structured dialogue with civil society representatives to discuss issues related to the implementation of reforms. We need to encourage

dialogue over confrontation. Policy-making will then be positively affected, as well as the overall socio-economic and cultural development of your countries and of the whole region.

In our view, civil society should not only be active nationally, but also at local and regional level, where the debates and discussions with the citizens, with businesses, with cultural organisations and the political leadership can lead to immediate tangible results.

And so we get to the pivotal point of this forum, of this initiative: the creation of mechanisms for dialogue at regional level between civil society, authorities and the EU. We will build on the progress made during the open exploratory consultation process the EU institutions have had with you, civil society organisations, in the past year. However, I do admit that you have been faster than us in your analysis, activities and ideas. We need to catch up! Over the next two days we must decide how best to move forward together and we need to explore how to put the good ideas you have come up with into practice.

Your countries – as well as Europe – face unprecedented challenges. As I said, we will need strong institutions and solid states to address them. But we will also need the greatest part of society to be on our side. The events of the past years have shown how much energy lies in your people. We need that energy, to fight terrorism, dictatorships, religious hatred. An awakening of civil society to shore up democracy against our common enemies. Europe will be with you – as a partner, as a friend. Thank you.

## **ANNEX 3**

### **Address**

#### **Delivered by Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations**

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I should start by thanking the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee for hosting today's event. I'm delighted that so many representatives of Civil Society have come to share their views and visions on how our joint efforts can help to make the Mediterranean region a haven of stability, prosperity and peace.

Given the difficult conditions under which some of you are obliged to operate, the fact that you are here today and that you continue to stand up for what you believe in, is an incredible achievement in itself.

Our history shows that civil society has played a major role in democratic development. The most prosperous functioning democracies are those where civil society can thrive, where every group can have its voice heard and where civil society can freely monitor government activities. An active and vibrant civil society acts as a bridge between people and their authorities.

In times of profound change in the region, your role is fundamental in promoting increased freedom, human rights and the respect of rule of law. When the room for dialogue with government narrows, which we see happening in some countries, it is extremely worrying.

But let me highlight one key point: a government's long-term stability is best assured when it guarantees a safe space for open public debate. Protecting fundamental freedoms is not and should not be seen as incompatible with a stable society.

Peace, stability and prosperity are your goals. You aspire to live and work in a society where enterprise and creativity can flourish and where freedom of expression and association is guaranteed. It is in the EU's interest to do whatever it can to ensure that these aims are achieved.

A vibrant society should reinforce the sense of citizenship. For the EU, it is of prime importance to assist you in defending your rights as citizens. Whatever the level of ambition expressed by partners' governments in their relations with the EU, the EU will always consider engagement with civil society as essential.

The EU will continue to support you in creating the space necessary for civil society to play its full role as a builder of democracy. We see this as an investment, through which we aim to help organisations such as yours to become stronger actors and partners.

If you permit me, I will illustrate this by giving you examples of some of our key instruments.

With the creation of the Neighbourhood Civil Society Facility, the allocation to civil society support reached 52 million euros in the period from 2011 to 2013. As proof of our commitment, we are increasing this support for the period from 2014 to 2017 by making up to 67 million euros available. It is worth highlighting that this comes on top of the support provided to civil society by other EU instruments, such as the European Initiative for Human Rights and Democracy and other thematic programmes of the European Commission.

Moreover, as another sign of our commitment to democracy and the defence of human rights, the European Union has supported the establishment of the European Endowment for Democracy which offers a rapid and flexible funding mechanism.

Intercultural dialogue is also key for the EU, where the Anna Lindh Foundation is our main partner in the southern Neighbourhood.

Our support will have a greater impact, if:

First, you engage – where possible - with your governments at all levels (national and local) to participate in policy development and dialogue, and to encourage more inclusive and sustainable social and economic development. We are already working with you on developing the skills necessary to make this type of engagement a success;

Second, the voice of the grassroots is heard by you and through you;

Third, you cooperate with civil society organisations from other countries in the region; and

Fourth, you mobilise citizens to get involved in the development of their own communities.

These are the objectives we have been aiming for since the first Forum last year and we aim to continue pursuing this initiative with increased commitment in the coming years.

One of your common challenges is employment. At least 5 million new jobs need to be created every year to employ a growing work force and to ensure social inclusion. To create this amount of jobs, economic growth in the region should accelerate from the 2.5% to 3.5% of recent years to above 6%. This is ambitious, but not unrealistic. There is great potential and I have no doubt that the private sector has a key role to play as the main driver for growth and employment. That is why it so important the business community should be a key component of civil society.

Education, training and lifelong learning must play a central role in helping to build strong economies. It is not only the best investment for the future of the young people of the region; it is also the best antidote to radicalisation.

I cannot speak about this region without referring to the intense suffering being experienced in many parts of it:

- the continuing conflict in Syria, with its millions of displaced persons and refugees, impacting and threatening the stability of its immediate neighbours, who are bearing the brunt of this human drama;
- the turbulence in Libya, which is also a threat to its neighbours and which has also horrified us with the tragedy of the Mediterranean boat people;

This too is our neighbourhood and we must all work together to find every opportunity, however small-scale, to contribute to peace and dialogue.

Ladies and gentlemen

I would also like to say a few words about the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the context of today's forum. A key question is how do we ensure that the voice of civil society is heard and respected when policy decisions are made and implemented? Our contribution consists in making our own policy-making processes open, transparent and inclusive. And this is precisely our approach to the review of the ENP.

Today's forum gives us a valuable opportunity to hear from you. How can we address your needs and ambitions? How can we address joint interests such as migration, mobility, energy, connectivity, trade and youth, while ensuring that we do not lose sight of our cherished, universal values? What should our future priorities be in the region? How can we respond to the varying needs of different countries within a common framework? How can we make better use of regional and intra-regional fora?

In this respect, for instance, I see a very specific role for civil society, especially in countries where actual cross-border co-operation is very low, but the potential is extremely high. Perhaps where governments cannot or will not take certain initiatives, organisations such as yours can engage with counterparts within the region to encourage a bottom-up collaborative approach. I would be very keen to hear your views on this, especially within the context of the ENP review process.

We share many challenges. Together we also need to address the lack of real and sustainable reforms and crackdowns on freedoms for civil society, which undermines stability and security. I know that for some governments this is a sensitive topic but it goes without saying that the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms must continue to underpin our engagement with partner countries.

You have my commitment that the EU will continue to assist you in bringing stable democracy, respect for the rule of law, human rights and the rights of minorities to your countries. Thus, we will continue involving you in programme design and implementation.

A structured dialogue is taking place at national level through our delegations and at regional level through various dedicated platforms, such as this forum. The new ENP should build on these processes to further enhance the dialogue between civil society and authorities.

I encourage you to help us equip the new ENP with all the necessary tools to address the numerous and very diverse challenges we face together. I look forward to hearing your views today and in the coming weeks.

Thank you.