The Outcome Document of the Regional Conference for "Majalat" on Southern Neighbourhood Policies
Amman, 20-21 September 2018

The Regional Conference for "Majalat" on Southern Neighbourhood Policies was held on 20 and 21 September 2018 at the Geneva Amman Hotel in the presence of 100 representatives of civil society organizations in the South, including representatives of workers syndicates, social movements, youth and women's organizations, and human rights and development organizations that are engaged in political dialogue with the European Union.

The conference was the occasion to launch the program (Majalat), which is an initiative aimed at creating a space for constructive meetings and dialogues between civil society organizations, workers syndicates, social movements and academics from both sides of the Mediterranean and the European Union in a way that contributes in influencing the latter's visions and policies towards the region. The initiative was created by six civil society networks from the Euro-Mediterranean region: the Arab Network for Development (NGO), the Euro-Mediterranean Network for Human Rights, the Arb Trade Union Confederation (ATUC), Solidar, the French Euro-Mediterranean Network and the Moroccan Alternatives Forum, based on the results of previous dialogues with the EU. "Majalat" opens the dialogue on the following key themes: good governance, economic development, social dialogue, migration and security, countering violence, social and climate justice, and their impact on youth and women.

The conference included a screening of an introductory film about the initiative, and a presentation of the digital platform which will be an important tool for dialogue. As for the Conference sessions, they included the submission of policy papers prepared by civil society experts and addressed the four main axes of the 2018 political dialogue: economic and social policies, migration policies, security policies, anti-terrorism, and governance policies. These papers constituted a starting point for further discussion on the issues raised during the specialized workshops groups aiming at:

A) Identifying the reality and the fundamental challenges facing the region in each of the four fields.

B) Reviewing the relevant EU policies.

C) Setting priorities and practical suggestions for following-up the work in the institutionalized dialogue with the European Union, particularly within the framework of "Majalat".

Representatives of the European Commission participated in the work of the conference to review the priorities of the participants in preparation for Majalat's civil Forum in Brussels, scheduled on 20th and 21th of November 2018, which will provide an opportunity for direct dialogue between civil society organizations and EU representatives on suggested priorities.

1- The participants **affirmed the importance of partnering with the European Union and the need for the civil society engagement in the Southern Neighbourhood region in an institutionalized polical dialogue with the European Union's organizations** as it is an effective international partner in making overall policies in various fields: social, economic, commercial, cultural fields and migration. They stressed that the European Union presents its partnership with neighbouring countries **under the title of commitment to human rights, democracy, good governance and respect for common interests with partners, which are important entry points for the work of civil society organizations**. In addition to the fact that the European Union is keen on the participation of civil society, it emphasizes the need for a strong partnership with civil society in neighbouring countries in both the overall European strategy and the "Roots of Democracy and Road Maps for civil society with the European Union in neighbouring countries", the Institutional Internal Steering Group and the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) document for 2015. This participatory approach by the European Union is a source of appreciation by the participants, who seek to develop dialogue and institutionalize it in order to achieve the development goals of the people of the Southern Mediterranean countries, and common interests with the European Union and its people.They considered that the "Majalat" initiative is an important opportunity to consolidate and institutionalize this dialogue.

2- **The participants also affirmed that the Neighborhood Policy.In its previous and new versions, despite its importance, did not give the sufficient attention to the structural problems that hinder development and which are related to the applied economic and social models .**In addition**,** there were no in-depth evaluation conducted to review the impact of previous policies that were not proven efficient, prior to the adoption of the new Neighborhood Policy, but the European Union continued to follow the same development approach. Participants re-emphasized the importance of the Principle of Policy Coherence for Development, which was integrated in EU Law in 1992 and further reinforced in the Lisbon Treaty. The European Consensus for Development reaffirmed its commitment to this principle as a key element in the strategy for achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) in partner States.

3- Participants in the Regional Conference recognize that **the partnership between the EU and the Southern Mediterranean countries is not an equal partnership, as is the case for civil society;** this is due to structural and circumstantial reasons, which are summarized as follows:

A) European countries which are considered to be developed countries with strong economies and are united within the framework of a regional union, are partnering with eight individual

Arab states in the absence of a common framework. They are combined and asked to coordinate their policies and to define common objectives in the negotiation process, which leads to a structural imbalance between the two parties, and risks voiding the partnership of its content and turning it into agreements governed by the terms and interests of the strong party.

B) The European Union has decided on its own that the framework of partnership with the countries of its Southern eight Arab States, including Israel, without taking into consideration that this is politically and popularly unacceptable from the region's civil society and its organizations. The EU needs to reconsider its position in this matter if it wants to respect the opinion of the countries and peoples of the South.

In addition to structural causes, there are circumstantial factors that complicate the path of the partnership and influence its content. The most prominent of these factors:

C) The emergence of differences between the European position and the current US administration position, including the protectionist trend of the US administration and its entry into trade wars with its partners.

D) Ongoing wars in the Arab region and their complexity and transformation into international conflicts which results in the expansion of migration and terrorist acts, and the multiplicity of international and regional parties influencing the conditions and policies of the countries of the region.

E) As a result of these developments, the European Neighbourhood Policy is subject to considerable economic and political pressure, which is reflected in the domestic policy trends of the European countries themselves. The latter are facing close elections of the European Parliament in 2019 accompanied by a growing scepticism in the idea of the Union and its full respect to human rights. These developments, add to the security obsessions the feelings of extremism and xenophobia that are determining factors of both local and foreign policies.

4- The participants considered that the partnership between the EU and the Arab countries of the Southern Mediterranean should be based on confidence. The EU should take serious steps in addressing the countries of the Mediterranean and its people to enhance its confidence through:

A) A firm position in support of the rights of the Palestinian people whose national rights are at risk of total violation.

B) A position and a different policy practice regarding wars and conflicts in the region, starting from the war in Syria and in Libya (in particular) which are directly under the context of the European partnership.

C) Focus on social justice and equality and provide policy coherence that contributes to enhance the confidence and ensuring the practice of "what is preached".

Describing the reality

5. The Arab countries of the Southern Mediterranean have adopted growth models based on extractive sectors (oil or other mining materials), relying on economies based on financial or real estate sectors or based on foreign loans and aid; without sufficient attention to developing productivity, competitiveness and expanding the real economy. Trade has been dependent for decades on the logic of liberalization and open markets and gives priority, protection and flexibility to foreign direct investment at the expense of national priorities and citizens' rights.

6- On the other hand, these countries do not rely on redistribution policies through the design of tax regimes or the adoption of integrated systems of social protection; at a time when the non- structured (informal) sector occupies a significant place of more than half the national labour market. This is accompanied by the increasing intensity in the employment of women without legal or social protection, even decent working conditions are not available, including for those people working in the same structured sectors. This model has demonstrated its inability to overcome the phenomena of poverty and unemployment. It has resulted in a widening inequality gap among and within countries, between women and men, and between skilled and unskilled workers, and has increased the exclusion of already marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities, agricultural workers, remote rural populations and migrant workers.

7- **European Union policies**

The reviewed European Neighborhood Policy promotes trade liberalization as an essential tool for growth and a remedy to poverty in both European and neighboring countries. Noting that the (Association Agreements)- which promote free trade- have continued for more than a decade without achieving the desired results in terms of development and addressing inequality. Furthermore, the approach in the new neighborhood policy did not make the link directly between trade liberalization policies and addressing inequality as reflected in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Many of the EU's plans and programs implemented in the Southern Neighboring States (e.g. the Lebanon Action Plan) treated anti- poverty through the implementation of programs and safety nets targeting the most marginalized groups, and it separates anti-poverty policies from social and overall development policies.

8- Trade policies and the investment of the European Union especially the bilateral free trade agreements between the EU and the States of the South, are considered inconsistent with development policies in place, and reduce the policy space available to the Arab States. They also contributed in increasing deficit in the trade balance. The new proposals include the re-production of the same policies with more extended and deep agreements, within the framework of Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTAs), as it includes

additional types of services, public tenders and agriculture and adopt a mandatory language in the application without evaluating previous policies and their implications for development.

9- The new European Neighborhood Policy encourages the modernization and reform of tax regimes to combat cross-border tax fraud and tax evasion without hindering trade, investment and fair competition, while overlooking the approach to tax policies as a tool to stimulate national production and redistribution.

10- Through the new European Neighborhood Policy and the European Investment Plan, the EU is also seeking to strengthen partnerships with the private sector with a view to enhance the effectiveness in service delivery, job creation and (leveraging finance). However, considering the private sector as a key development partner requires an evaluation of previous experiences and their impact on development; in terms of effectiveness in providing services-especially in the framework of public-private partnerships- or in terms of creating new job opportunities, quality and provision of suitable working conditions, and protecting the environment .It is also crucial to create accountability mechanisms for the private sector based on human rights standards.

11- Practical suggestions

12-Review the policies and programs of the European Union with regard to social protection and the formation of Task Force with the participation of civil society (especially trade unions) to formulate specific proposals for moving from a targeting approach to an overall approach that considers social protection to be a human right. Knowing that, the overall approach should include everyone, in particular, those working in the informal economy, women, youth, the unemployed, persons with disabilities, migrants and refugees, taking into account the qualitative dimension of all these categories. Participants believe that the Social Protection Floor Initiative initiated by UN organizations is a good starting point.

13- Work within the Task Force to enhance the commitment of European companies that invest in the Southern Mediterranean countries and those who benefit from European cooperation with the requirements of sustainability and respect for human rights in their work, and in respect to equal partnership with the national private sector, especially the preservation of the environment and the conditions of decent work for its workers.

14- Expand the dialogue between the European Commission, specifically Trade management (DG Trade) on the one hand and civil society organizations on the other on how to evaluate the policies and free trade agreements that have been implemented in the past and their implications on development in order to propose specific alternatives that take into account equality, social justice and development priorities in the South.

Describing the reality

15- Migration and population movements within one region or between the South and the North constitute a priority for countries on both sides of the Mediterranean. These population movements are increasing optionally or by force for various reasons, ranging from seeking employment to a better life, studying, escaping political, social or cultural persecution, or fleeing wars and armed conflicts that threaten the lives of people.

16- Population mobility and migration are linked to freedom of movement, normal population mobility, interaction of civilizations and exchange between North and South and among all countries in general. But it is still constrained compared to the free movement of goods, capital and ideas, including with the EU. Access to visas is complicated and lengthy, while Europeans enjoy the privilege of entering most of the southern neighbouring countries without the need for visas or obtaining them by formal procedures at airports and the entry points.

17- There are currently in the Southern Mediterranean countries concerned with the partnership about 6.3 million internally displaced persons, and 5.5 million refugees; in addition, the number of citizens of these countries, who currently reside in the European Union is about 3916400 people that have migrated to it in progressively since 2014. These countries also constitute a migration path from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe; some of them settle in the transit States. The total number of victims migrants across the Mediterranean was 1,408 between 2014 and 2018 (as of 2 October; a major responsibility shared by the international community, the southern Mediterranean countries and Europe.

European Union policies

18- The migration policy of the European Union has been based on the security approach, starting with the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM) of 2005 and then the European Convention on Migration and Asylum adopted in October 2008; which increased the support of the company "Frontex" and to involve third countries to surveillance the external borders of Europe leading to the decision of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament on 14 September 2016 to establish a European force of Border Guards ,Coast Guard and the coordinated management of the outer borders of the Schengen area. These approaches ignore the principles of human rights and are influenced by populist speeches and by tide of xenophobia that are growing in member states and avoid direct confrontation with them. Recently, it has been proven that these policies contribute to the generation of increasing more waves of irregular migrations and did not limit it. It also exacerbates the internal crises resulting from the integration or isolation of migrants in the receiving countries.

19- The participants considered that mechanisms of development of bilateral and regional agreements on migration and asylum issues within the framework of the European Neighborhood Policy and the Global Approach on Migration and Mobility (GAMM), which focus on legal migration, development and migrants' right, should be more participatory in order to take into account the interests and concerns of all concerned parties.

20- Civil society also believes that selective immigration policies strictly restricted to the interests of the current European economy, especially in the labor marketnot confirm to international law and require revision in conformity with its rules.

Practical suggestions

21. To develop a common mechanism for European Union and civil society organizations to monitor migration policies and their impact on the rights of migrants, and to make recommendations on immediate and medium-term interventions to protect refugees in the South and provide them with adequate living conditions, in the absence of current policies and measures.

Fourth: Governance and Rule of Law

Describing the reality

22- The data available in the region indicate a significant and serious decrease in the reality of governance. The participants in the conference consider that the structural characteristics of the State and its spoils system are among the chronic causes of the current situation in terms of the lack of respect for the autonomy margin of the State and its apparatus in the management of public affairs, its lack of separation of political functions and administrative functions of the state and the weakness of institutions in favor of persons. These characteristics encourage the tendency to weaken democracy, weaken accountability, encouraging corruption, and disrupting mechanisms for the democratic transition of authority through democratic and transparent elections**.**

23- The participants consider that this reality cannot be separated from the structure of the global system that encourages crony capitalism through the growing influence of transnational companies and the liberalization of investments, thereby narrowing the available policy space to developing countries; as well as to the role of international financial institutions which propose austerity policies that do not distribute the burden of reforms to society equitably in many countries of the region. This system directly affects the sovereignty of States and its ability to arrange its policies according to its national priorities. It also puts pressure on public and natural resources by reducing public investments, accelerating privatization and reducing direct taxes; thereby increasing public indebtedness. Abroad does not take responsibility for the weakness of democratic governance, but the external collusion and its acceptance of reality in order to safeguard its interests contributes to this to a great extent. That's what

scientifically weakens the mechanisms of accountability and leads the affected parties to resort to external accountability process.

EU policies

24- The EU is an influential international player. It can therefore contribute to improving the terms of international cooperation in order to reduce conditionality and improve the representation of developing countries in the international governance system (as set out in the tenth objective of sustainable development). It can also rehabilitate the balance in the financing for development process by: strengthening its development component, separating it from humanitarian assistance, removing security and defence assistance from its framework, and pushing for respect for the principles of "development effectiveness" including the role of development assistance. The new trends that focus on the role of foreign direct investment and public-private partnerships do not abide by binding human rights and the environmental rights .

25- The EU calls for policy coherence and the adoption of the principles of human rights, democracy and environmental standards, and to develop partnership with neighbouring countries of the South and its commitment to international rules. This means committing to tackle illicit financial flows, tax evasion, taking swift measures to allow stolen assets and cancelling bad debts to help the countries of the Mediterranean overcome economic crises.

26. The European Union is committed to promoting transparency and anti-corruption policies, transparency and dissemination of information and independent evaluation of policies and results. What is supposed to be reflected in its relations with governments and in its agreements concluded with countries, contributing to national efforts and hearing the views of civil society and commitment to its content whenever this content is consistent with human rights principles and provides alternatives or substantive observations on the adopted policies.

27- To support the European Union the national efforts regarding the completion of the legislative and legal system that helps anti- corruption and tax evasion, it gives right of access to information and protects it while not extend in the concept of strong security.

28- To work with the civil society in the Southern Neighbouring countries to adopt domestic legislation that guarantees the independence of the judiciary from the political authority and their cooperation. The legislative system is not sufficient alone if the judiciary authority is subject to interference by the domination or pressure of political authorities, as is currently the case.

29- To organize dialogues on how to combat corruption and about governance with representatives of governments, civil society and experts to reach codes of conduct or common points to follow-up.

30- To develop a common regional framework between the European Union and civil society organizations to monitor governance, detect and deal with corruption at the national and international levels, including ensuring access to information, protecting whistleblowers and preventing illicit financial flow.

31- To establish a time-bound plan of action, in cooperation and partnership with governments and civil society, to return stolen assets and cancel corrupt debt, and reschedule the debts and financial burdens of the Southern Neighboring countries towards the European Union, especially those committed before 2011 with governments that have lost its popular and political legitimacy.

Fifth: Security and "Counter-violence"

Describing the reality

32-   Security issues and combating extremism and terrorism cannot be isolated from the issues of democratic governance, respect for human rights, principles of citizenship and the rule of law; and cannot also be isolated from the historical and current context, and or by dealing with it partially looking just to its security and technical aspects.

33- The participants believe that the approach to extremism and terrorism is often done in a typical way and is not seen from the perspective of the neighboring southern countries, such as the suffering from the Israeli occupation of Arab lands and the repeated attacks on it, the armed conflicts inside and outside the borders, resulting casualties, migration, displacement and destruction of large numbers of the population. Hiding this situation when analyzing the phenomenon of extremism and terrorism leads to a fragmental approach. Moreover, inflate of defense and security budgets at the expense of development, and the proliferation of war-economy networks run by warlords themselves, whose interests have been stabilized and mixed with the interests of the state, contributes to the growth of extremism and terrorism.

34- The authoritarian and undemocratic political systems that continue to violate human rights continuously contribute to the growth the phenomenon of extremism. The dominance of patriarchal-masculine culture, which glorifies violence and constitutes the basis of power and makes violence in its extreme form more acceptable, as well as the absence of a system of rights, and positive law dominance, the absence of critical and scientific thinking.

35- Violent extremism and terrorism are not spontaneous or immediate, but are the result of professional and organized action that persuades young people to join terrorist networks with extremist ideologies by focusing on the idea of real injustice in the contemporary world, the region and the particular country. It is necessary to distinguish between the social and historical political tracks referred to in the preceding paragraphs, and between the mechanisms for the production of terrorism and violent and organized extremism, as the mechanisms for dealing with them and confronting them are quite different. The participants stress that the peoples of the Southern Neighboring countries, its institutions and civil society organizations are the first victims of violent extremism and terrorism which has hit European countries.

36- The European Union's organizations have put the issue of security and stability in the southern Mediterranean at the highest priority since the adoption of the new European Neighborhood Policy (ENP). The European Union has stressed the need to work on resilience by "strengthening the capacity of States and communities to anticipate and to adjust pressures beyond their direct control while maintaining social and political cohesion without undermining basic human rights and democratic principles. This approach places the issue of State security at the heart of discussions and seeks solutions through prevention, protection, interdiction and response. Most of these measures are applied in Europe and its borders, while the theme of prevention is the one that means the countries of the South more than others. It affects overall policies, rights issues, economic & cultural conditions, and common relations, and is not limited to the security side.

37- Participants consider that Europe gives priority deal with security issues, without dealing with social, economic, environmental and cultural causes underlying, whether in European societies themselves or in the countries of the South. It believes that these policies deal with the results and may have temporary effect, but are not successful in dealing with the causes of these phenomena and treating them sustainably.

38- Under the weight of security concerns and the sense of permanent danger, the European Union's plan do not distinguish adequately between three phenomena: First: the wars and major conflicts in the region and their impact on citizens; and the second: are the structural pillars in politics, society and culture that paves the way for violence and extremism ,and the third: is the work of organized terrorist networks, which often have connections with

intelligence agencies of foreign countries and used as a tool of foreign policy. As mentioned above, the security approach related to the third phenomenon (i.e. terrorist networks) becomes the gateway to deal with the other two phenomena, which leads to divergence of views and is a factor of failure to cure the reasons successfully.

39- The participating organizations of the Conference call upon the European Union to develop its plan of action towards a distinction between three levels (wars, conflicts, occupation; political, social, environmental, cultural issues of violenc; and organized terrorist networks), clear allocation of resources for each level, and limitation of use of security interaction in the third phenomenon on terrorist networks.

40- The organizations participating in the conference do not adopt the security approach, and see that its role in dealing with the structural aspects of the problem. It is therefore possible to start forming working groups and research groups to dismantle structural and emergency causes, political, social and cultural that contribute to increased violence and pave the way for the acceptance of terrorism and the development of programs with governments and the European Union to address these phenomena.

41- To develop early warning mechanisms and response between the European Union and civil society. From this perspective, where"Majalat"'s role is in organizing an annual delegation to visit Brussels to give its testimony and its point of view in this field.

Sixth: Civil society

Describing the reality

42- The European Union seeks to activate the engagement of civil society organizations in overall policies dialogue within the frameworks of the Neighborhood Policy with the South, where civil society is supposed to play an important role. However, this partnership is not equal, as its participation is narrow, its ability to access resources and information is limited, and the frameworks of national and regional dialogue are formal or absent.

43- Civil society is engaged in dialogue and partnership in order to activate it and make sure that the voices of citizens and various social groups of stakeholders and those affected by the neighborhood policies are heard and transmitted to the negotiating table with governments, especially in light of weakness or lack of real interactive and democratic mechanisms that places the point of view of governments as a national point of view. Therefore, this

participation needs a qualitative dimension necessary to balance the expression of the national interests of the countries of the South, although the participation of civil society is not limited to non-binding consultation, but rather to adopt means and procedures to influence overall policies.

Practical suggestions

44- To develop a mechanism to manage the relationship between the European Union and civil society organizations at the regional level in complementarily with the national level, and to emphasize that the involvement of civil society is not temporary or seasonal or depends on topics chosen by the European Union; rather, the civil society should be engaged in all stages of overall policies making and following the priorities it define according to its reading of the challenges and ways of dealing with them.

45- Civil society organizations should formulate practical and clear proposals, including the formation of the observatories previously proposed, to be a scientific mechanism for monitoring and analysis, proposing appropriate steps by civil society and presenting them to the European Union in the four fields of neighborhood policies, and others as appropriate.

46- The civil society organizations participating in the conference will develop a research work plan to build and to develop their own capacities in order to maximize the advantage of the dialogue space provided by "Majalat" project and to ensure the sustainability of cooperation among them in the future according to their own priorities as well.