

Newsletter on Meeting of WANA FORUM May 9th-10th 2011, Amman, Jordan

Background

West Asia - North Africa (WANA) has, in recent months, entered a period of fundamental change. While few could have predicted the nature and extent of transformation, the underlying driving forces behind the various protests in the Middle-East have been present for some time. Indeed, the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon and the Green Revolution in Iran could be considered as the forerunners of a new call for change in governance that has united people across WANA in the pursuit



of human dignity and freedom. As hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets in protest of political and economic

conditions, in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Yemen, Jordan, Syria and elsewhere, the implications and consequences of change remain unclear.



In response to regional events, the annual meeting of the WANA Forum

convened participants from across the region, including academics, intellectuals, civil society leaders, and political and private sector representatives, to examine the nature of the ongoing transition.

As a regional process, directed by and for its participants, the WANA Forum is committed to providing a non-threatening, neutral platform



for dialogue and developing new regional thinking based upon shared values. It has long been the belief of Forum members that through cooperation and the participation of what HRH

Prince El Hassan bin Talal calls the 'Third Domain' of partnership can all sectors of



society – civil, public and private – develop responsible stewardship for a more sustainable, prosperous and equitable future.

The annual held on 9-10th May in Amman delivered

appropriate messages to the broader region and to the international community about how economic



interests of nation-states can align with holistic regional aspirations that ensure human dignity and foster social cohesion.

1. The wave of protests that has swept across the West Asia North Africa (WANA) region over the past months and now termed as the 'Arab Spring' has triggered fundamental change throughout our region. This change has begun, and now the societies that have experienced protests against economic inequality and political oppression have entered into a complex and precarious process that can best be described as a *transition*.

2. The language of “transition” rather than alternatives such as “revolution” or “development” suggests two key elements of the ongoing upheaval. First, they represent a process rather than an event. We are in store for years or decades of change – some beneficial, some not – rather than a quick “colour” revolution such as have previously been seen in corners of the former Soviet Union. Second, this transition will – by necessity rather than choice – build upon current institutional arrangements.
3. Ultimately the notion of transition highlights that it would be neither possible nor wise to pretend as if WANA states and societies are simply “wiping the slate clean” and beginning anew. There will be



complex problems to solve and the time has come for the region’s intellectuals to take the lead and present a vision of the future through the WANA platform. The WANA Forum is committed to providing a non-threatening, neutral platform for dialogue and developing new regional thinking based upon shared values. The forum encourages the development of a partnership between the “Three Domains,” composed of – civil, public and private sectors, so as to develop a responsible stewardship for a more sustainable, prosperous



and equitable future. It also met to consider how to align the economic interests of nation-states with regional aspirations that *ensure human dignity and foster social cohesion*

4. Participants reviewed the prevailing situation based on analysis presented by different experts. These were made in the following categories:
 - Nature & Direction of Transition
 - Building WANA’s Political Identity
 - Lessons in Transition
 - World Bank’s Analysis of ME Conflict
 - Economic Issues in Transition

- Towards Social Cohesion
- Presentation of Guiding Principles of WANA contained in its Social Charter

5. Chairman RIPORT, Mr. Khalid Aziz attended the WANA Forum meeting and presented a paper on, “Political Empowerment & Violence – Lessons from Pakistan’s FATA.” He also briefed the Pakistan Ambassador to Jordan, Ms. Attiya Mahmood and embassy staff regarding issues and problems in Pakistan today.



Future steps

Both RIPORT & WANA are examining ways to establish long term institutional links that interalia may adopt the following:

1. Exchange of scholars and intellectuals between the two organizations
2. Joint research in areas of interest



3. Providing inputs in managing programs for;
 - Basra Reconstruction based on RIPORT’s own experience in strategic reforms
 - Capacity Building of Civil Servants in the region by training the trainers in association with others