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Ladies and gentlemen, it is really a great pleasure to be taking part in this conference or meeting, and I would like to thank the Spanish government and the Foundation FPSC for supporting this sort of intellectual meeting to discuss a very critical topic at this junction in our lives in the Arab region.

Today I am representing UNDP at regional level and I will try to cover three main issues:

- 1.- To give a brief on how UNDP is responding to the "Arab spring" as it is called.
- 2.- What would be the post-2015 Agenda.
- 3.- To have a look at the Official Aid for Development (ODA) from a UNDP's perspective

1.- How UNDP is responding to the "Arab spring"

To start with, it is very important, I think, to look at the context: what started in the end of 2010- 2011 is a new era, and also a new wave for us to think about what is taking place. It's a time where a process has started and a process has been unleashed as much as whether we want to think of it optimistically or pessimistically. The events we saw in Tunisia can really be a process that gives us hope. First of all voices have to be heard, there has to be a place for accountability, a place for transparency, for rule of law and that is no longer the ability of regimes to dictate and I think that is something that woke us up in the region and this is very critical.



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If we look at it, I would term it as a crisis of governance that unleashed this whole transformation. In that respect we cannot look at governance per se, because we have to apply a political economic analysis to what took place? What we saw was increasing unemployment, increasing inequalities, poverty, marginalization and abuse of women, increasing strict control over all avenues of expression which would allow for voices to be heard, and for state-society relations to be healthy or that would allow for democratic processes.

However, we cannot unpack all the reasons that led to the various protests movements. But I would like to bring one example which is that of Jordan. Why we have it termed as a "deviant case", why demonstrations in Jordan did not reach the level it did elsewhere? Was the regime able to actually respond to the demands in the streets or is it a deviant case?, in the sense that we look at Morocco for example and, yes, the king in Morocco was able to contain through major transformations, allowing some sort of constitutional democracy to be accepted, to control what was taking place or mediate it.

In the case of Jordan what we see is a very smart political movement, where, voices are heard, there are transformations taking place, but they are not touching the core of a great deal of the issues.

We see also what we say in Arabic ba'ba', or the boogeyman in English. It is funny how these two words are very similar! What will happen if we continue along the road asking for real democratic transformations, would it be another Iraq? Would it be another Syria? And that's what the Arab spring taught us that every model can be different. It is not necessarily going to be an Iraq, let us look for other model so we can have some optimism.

So, at least from a UNDP's perspective, what we are looking at is that there is a transformation, there is optimism but there is also a great deal of impediments and unless they are being resolved this process will also be stalled.

The economic problems in the region are tremendous. The political horizon does not give a lot of optimism and what would be done in terms of the decline we are seeing for example in economic growth rates, increasing unemployment and unmet needs. So, we need to examine the various factors of the transitions from a political economic perspective and as development agencies, we also say it is a crisis of governance and we have to address it.



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I will not attempt at all to talk about Palestine, because I think we have esteemed Palestinians with us who can give a more in-depth analysis but I could speak on behalf of UNDP - PAPP (Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People), what we are saying is that as PAPP we have to focus on critical areas: One of which is Governance, rule of law, access to justice, upholding issues of human rights and ensuring that the Palestinians have access to legal protection and security

This is one of the key areas, we also focus on state-societal relationship, how can we ensure there is accountability, how can we ensure that there is transparency, how can we ensure there is public oversight, citizens' oversight. The continued and deepening occupation of the territory, and its severe socio-economic consequences, serve as a stark reminder of the critical role that UNDP/PAPP continues to play today, over three decades after its establishment.

The issue of Gaza with no access is very critical because we cannot keep a blind eye and say we have no access, we have no control, no contact policy there are many layers we can work with, including what we are doing under the rule of law through service providers and organizations and I think it is a role for Development agencies to prepare for an eventual reconciliation. And we are also working on local government, on the rule of law, on environmental issues, be it water – which is a critical issue for Gaza- be it sanitation, waste water, etc.. For example, the assessment we have done about the recent floods, of how many schools were damaged, how many clinics, for all of these, we cannot just say we cannot work in Gaza, we cannot operate. For us as UNDP and as UN agencies together, because we are doing joint programming, we have to do critical assessments and provide support in cooperation with our partners.

This is why one of the main goals of the UNDP in the Arab region is to develop sound governance with enhanced transparency. In the Arab region, calls for a more accountable and representative government have been at the core of the social unrest. In its strategic framework, the UNDP addresses these multi-faceted challenges with a comprehensive approach. Because we believe in growth that creates wealth and opportunities for the many, not the few, because we believe in development that benefits those living today, as well as future generations, we bring local partners together to support the holistic implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, with democratic governance at its center.

A more participatory and inclusive government system, allowing for meaningful participation of youth, women and poor, can be achieved through strengthening state - society relations by providing space to discuss and to develop a shared agenda. For



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this reason we prioritize the strengthening of national and local institutions in order to move towards accountability, transparency, efficiency and fiscal stability.

In Palestine, our aim is to apply the principles of democratic participation to government-led processes and thereby strengthen the process, as well as enhance state-society relations. Our extremely successful programme for increasing municipal own-source revenues through property tax, for example, is being complemented by empowering youth to lead on citizen accountability schemes within municipalities. In a similar manner our efforts to strengthen the rule of law go hand-in-hand with interventions providing marginalized population groups better access to justice - again in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In so-called "Area C" our entire engagement and the government's engagement will be guided by recently conducted comprehensive consultations with the local population residing in these localities.

2.- The Post-2015 MDGs Agenda

The post-2015 development agenda provides the opportunity for societies to shift to a more just world, where resources are shared more equitably and people have a greater say in the decisions that affect their lives. The global consultation process on this post-2015 development agenda has clearly revealed that it is only through addressing governance bottlenecks and ensuring spaces for participation in policy and programme formulation, implementation and monitoring that this can be achieved. To enhance democratic governance within the post-MDG period 14 key messages have been identified. These key messages state that:

- Responsive and effective governance is multi-dimensional and a critical means to achieve development goals, but it is also important as an end in itself and for people to interact and exercise their rights.
- Governance is viewed as an enabler for socio-economic transformation and the improvement of lives through the eradication of structural inequality.
- Accountability and transparency, underpinned by international human rights standards and principles, are essential for ensuring that development is sustainable and responsive to the needs of people.
- Strengthening local governments and local development is critical for ensuring empowerment, civic participation and better service delivery.
- Youth concerns are critical for the post-2015 agenda, with a growing focus on opportunities for employment, innovation and shared wealth-creation for the next and successive generations.
- Access to justice and effective justice administration are enablers for development and human rights.

Now, in terms of the Post-2015 MDG agenda, from an UNDP perspective there has been a great deal of discussions over what the MDGs have achieved, were they just idealistic goals and are there clear assessments in terms of progress achieved globally.

We are happy to say that most of the goals have been achieved globally. Significant and substantial progress has been made in meeting many of the targets—including halving the number of people living in extreme poverty and the proportion of people without sustainable access to improved sources of drinking water. The proportion of urban slum dwellers declined significantly. Yet, the achievement of the MDGs has been uneven among and within countries.

However, what we see also is that challenges remain very high; we still have increasing inequalities across countries and within each country. For us, this is a critical issue and there has been a global consultation on what then should be the new MDG- and one of the major considerations taken is to consider Sustainable Development and the reason for that is without considering an integrated approach to developmental objectives we cannot achieve any of the MDG. So sustainable development and looking forward to what the future generations can have is critical.

If you follow the global debate because it has been carried out in over 77 countries of what should be the objectives, and one of the ideas we thought about, in the office yesterday, is if we should be carrying the same sort of consultation in Palestine to say what would be your priorities, is it education, environment etc. Because these are the global conclusions on what should be the other goals or is it on freedom, whether it is from hunger, occupation, control, restrictions. So it would be an interesting debate but globally it is not yet settled what would be the next agenda in terms of SDG.

Another interesting factor is governance which came out as a major goal to focus on, globally. In the Millennium Declaration governance, it was there, but it was not specific goal and now we see governance is becoming a critical demand since without having voices, without having participation, inclusion, without having freedoms including freedom from hunger, freedom from oppression, that we cannot achieve the MDGs and governments have to be accountable and donors and development partners need to work together to support national aspirations and address national needs.

This being said, poverty should not only be understood as a matter of economic prosperity. Poverty also concerns the political, legal and social structures that tend to marginalize social groups and, sometimes, the entire society. It also applies to people whose voice and political leverage are denied. This is particularly true in the Palestinian context, where the people are seen as suffering from poverty related to

disempowerment under the Israeli occupation regime. Since the uprisings in the Arab region have spread, many social groups have remained excluded from the political process, mainly because of a lack of sound governance systems. These excluded groups comprise in particular the youth, but also women and girls. Both groups make up a high proportion of people living in income poverty and are deprived of education, health, expression and are often exposed to violence.

3.- Official Aid for Development (ODA) from a UNDP's perspective

Achieving progress on democratic governance within the framework of the MDGs and the post-2015 development agenda, however, requires consistent and long-term engagement - and thus financial resources.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration explicitly recognized the role of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the development process. Particularly in the Arab region ODA is likely to remain a strong vehicle to promote democratic governance and pro-poor growth. The International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico in 2002, clearly linked the achievement of the MDGs to increased ODA volumes, but also reiterated the need to utilize ODA in a more effective manner.

A quick overview of recent ODA flows to Palestine and 9 Arab countries directly affected by the Arab Spring movement indicates a rise in Official Development Assistance (ODA) until 2008. In 2009 and 2010 ODA flows declined steadily as a result of the economic crisis experienced by donor countries. However, following the Arab Spring movement ODA levels to these Arab countries increased significantly in 2011 and even more so in 2012. The ODA figures clearly underscore the political interest of the international community in the Middle East region, as well as the readiness to provide increased financial support during times of political transformation.

At the same time we see there is more effort towards harmonizing aid and we have now. Since Busan, we did see a lot of progress in terms of harmonizing aid and really focusing it on priorities. Countries have made great progress including Palestine in terms of the Paris Declaration and looking at harmonizing aid. But still we have a long way to go.

So, what are the prospects for us as UNDP within the transition what we have attempted to do is really support key areas such as transformational justice, supporting constitution formulation, supporting the election processes. But we still see there is a need to focus on bringing on board the youth voice because they are the majority demographically. We continue as development agencies to explore what is



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the best approach to address youth-related issues. Should we focus at the project level such as on public oversight, that focuses on hearing their voices or holding conferences for them so they can express their opinions and to actually bring them in and channel their voices in a more institutionalized form. So this is one key area.

The second key area is women's equality and gender empowerment. There has been great progress and women were heavily engaged in the transformations taking place, but yet women were not fully included in the transitional processes and there have been increased cases of violence against women and other aspects that may roll back some prior gains. So how can we support a democratic process that promotes equality, and also how can we support a democratic process that supports pro-poor economic growth.

Conclusion

Today, we have the opportunity to discuss the aftermath and what we can do to harness its impact for the post-2015 development agenda. We should ensure that this movement leaves a lasting legacy and that the political transitions bear fruition, so that democracy truly takes root in the region. If the economy doesn't recover, if jobs are not created, if all the voices are not included, we face the risk of missing this outstanding opportunity. Tunisia, with its newly adopted constitution, shows us the way. But many challenges remain and the Arab region needs more than ever to be assisted in its transition to democracy, particularly in the countries where social unrest has turned into violent clashes.

Many impediments prevail. Even though the region harbors a huge economic potential, inequalities in the region keep widening and unemployment, especially youth unemployment, prevails. In Palestine unemployment rates reach a staggering 38% in the Gaza Strip and 25% in the West Bank respectively.

The road to sound democratic governance in the Arab region, and more specifically to statehood in Palestine, is a process that requires time to mature and genuine long-term engagement from international partners at the political, economic and developmental level. Only through a joint commitment based on a post-2015 consensus will we be able to achieve inclusive participation and political freedom in Palestine, and in the Arab world. For as long as the Arab region remains high on the political radar I am also confident that the financial resources will be available to implement the post-2015 development agenda for this region.

Thank you.