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## **Resolution: Seizing the Arab Spring for civil-society building in the EU's Southern neighbourhood**

*Adopted at the YEPP Council in Marseille on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2011.*

### **Recognizing that:**

1. Democracy, the rule of law and Human Rights are core values of the European Union. We support the promotion and strengthening of these values across the world.
2. The people in the Arab world in 2011 have overthrown autocratic regimes to establish democracy and political freedom;
3. Similar revolutions as the ones in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya are still taking place in other Arab countries, such as Syria, and deserve to be supported;
4. As an expression of solidarity with the Arab world, MEPs in Strasbourg on 27 October awarded the Sakharov Prize to five activists including Mohammed Bouazizi - a 27-year-old Tunisian street trader who burned himself to death in December 2010 in protest against corruption, inspiring revolutionaries at home and in the region;
5. The first set of post-transition rulers will have a tremendous responsibility to push their country further in the direction of democratization and rule of law. In particular countries, the response of the military power to this process will require the utmost attention of the global community, including the European Union, so as to guarantee the stability of the democratization process;
6. Building trust among long-time politically rival factions will be a serious challenge and will take time. Civil society organizations, which enjoy organic links to ordinary citizens and stand as an intermediary between society and the state, have a unique role to fulfill in this regard;

7. There exists a pertinent need to commit to supporting a greater role for these organisations, helping them develop their advocacy capacity, the ability to monitor reform and their role in implementing, monitoring and evaluating EU programmes;

**Acknowledging that:**

1. The principles that could serve enhancing civil-society building in the affected Arab countries are already laid out in the European Neighborhood Policy;
2. Arab countries are already embedded in Europe-based democracy-promotion networks. For example, most of the countries in the region are included in the European Neighborhood Policy or EU initiatives, such as the EU's Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network and the European Commission's Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean;
3. The European Commission's communication "EU response to the Arab Spring: the Civil Society Facility" acknowledges the importance of the civil society's role to contribute to policy-making and holds governments to account proposing the establishment of a Civil Society Facility that is to provide funding for non-state actors;
4. The Turkish case, where international NGOs and agencies, especially those associated with the European Union, helped to strengthen the institutional capacity of civil society organizations, proves that Western states and NGOs can play a constructive role in democratization;

**YEPP calls on:**

1. The support of the European people for the democratization processes that are taking place in Arab countries and the encouragement of those people that are still striving for democracy, fundamental Human Rights, religious freedom and rule of law;
2. External monitoring of the role of the military power by an independent body and its influence on the executive in particular countries, in the spirit of promoting civilian rule that is democratic, equitable, and just;
3. The EU to strengthen capacity of civil society, through exchanges of best practices and training, to promote democratic reform and increase public accountability, to enable civil society organisations to become stronger actors in the implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy objectives as they are outlined in the 2004 Strategy Paper;
4. The European Commission, EU member states and civil society to show commitment to these evolving societies, supporting them on the basis of their own terms and conditions. This takes form in cooperation with regional and local partners - building trust and encouraging the development of and cooperation between new local NGOs;

5. The EU to support Arab leadership by helping inter-governmental bodies such as the League of Arab States and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference to develop their political role in the Arab world in support of emerging democracies;
6. The freedom movement of the Arab spring to respect existing peace agreements and multi lateral relations with Israel as key to develop peaceful surroundings.