



Tunis Forum highlights the role of civil society in current democratic processes



Posted on [June 29, 2011](#)

For the first time since the Arab Spring, the Exchange Forum in Tunis, organized from 23rd to the 26th June by the Anna Lindh Foundation, a UNAOC key partner in the Mediterranean, brought together civil society and youth leaders from across the region to build together democratic and pluralistic societies. It concluded with a call to re-launch Mediterranean cooperation following the historic changes that are unfolding in the region.

The Forum ended after three days of debates and exchanges about best practices and project ideas between the participants, who had the opportunity to share their experiences of involvement in the process of democratic transition and intercultural dialogue.

The Forum overall included 8 thematic debate workshops, 100 presentations of best practices and project ideas, including by the UNAOC, and 6 presentations of resources for civil society action by partners of the Anna Lindh Foundation.

The UNAOC main activities in the Mediterranean raised a high level of interest among participants. A special focus was given to UNAOC initiatives that have a strong impact in the region: the joint media framework deploying experts at times of intercultural crises, trainings of civil society leaders and journalists, the international fellowship program, the Youth Solidarity Fund, the Summer School in Malta in August 2011 and Dialogue Cafe, among others.

The Forum brought together 235 people between social and cultural activists, youth leaders and bloggers, coming from 37 Southern Mediterranean and European countries. The majority of participants were from the Anna Lindh Arab Networks in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Mauritania, Palestine, Tunisia and Syria.

Three main issues were raised during the event:

- the role of social media as a new form of social and political activism;
- the challenge of social movements in countries that went through a revolution;
- new trends of artistic creation used as tools for social change.

What emerged from the three fields is the strong need to update the intercultural dialogue agenda of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, to address the short and long term needs of societies undergoing changes in the region. This is of particular relevance to the UNAOC with its Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean adopted in Malta in November 2010.

The recommendations put forward by the civil society members underlined the need to create a forum for civic education, to develop exchange programmes for professionals from the Northern and Southern shores of the Mediterranean, and to provide technical support at different levels, including for the development of a Constitution and the participation of Arab communities in Europe in dialogue and exchange programmes.

The recommendations in the field of social media included the idea for a support fund for new social media which engage in dialogue and social responsibility, as well as the need to provide technical assistance in post-revolutionary countries, and to help professionalize media channels and train bloggers in particular on issues of conflict resolution and diversity.

In the cultural field, the participants highlighted the need to provide support in the development and reinforcement of cultural projects through financial aid, to invest in new forms of creation in informal spaces, as well as to establish a 'bank' of cultural projects and a directory of artistic and cultural competences.

Kamel Jendoubi, the Tunisian President of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, addressing the participants at the closing ceremony, underlined the central role of civil society and youth in the historic process of democracy building that is going on in the Southern Mediterranean countries.

The Forum was co-organised with the Foundation for the Future and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in association with the UNESCO-ALECSO Club of Tunisia, the British Council, the European Broadcasting Union, the European Union's External Action Service and the Ministry of Culture Tunisia.

For more information:

Visit the website

www.tunisforum.org

Read the blog posts by the participants and share your views on the event

<http://tunisforum.org/blog>

Watch videos and photos from the event

<http://tunisforum.org/video>