



UN NEWS CENTRE

With breaking stories and
newswire products from



General Assembly President calls for inclusive economies in Arab world



General Assembly President Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser. UN Photo/Mark Garten

4 May 2012 –

The Arab world faces the challenge of building inclusive economies, the President of the General Assembly, Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, has said, stressing that this can only be achieved by ensuring that governments are accountable and responsive to the aspirations of their people.

Speaking at Moscow State University yesterday, Mr. Al-Nasser called for “economies that are geared to the interests of peoples and are protected from corrupt practices” in the Middle East and North Africa.

“In a few words, economies that will uphold the ideals of justice and dignity for all,” he said in his lecture, entitled “Middle East and North Africa at the Dawn of the 21st Century: Challenges and Hopes,” in which he focused on the economy, education, political affairs, security and culture in the Arab world.

“To do so, the wealth generated by extractive industries in countries rich in resources must be employed for the benefit of all.”

Mr. Al-Nasser emphasized that providing access and imparting quality education should be one of the region’s top priorities, noting that the international community can play a supportive role by providing sustainable funding to national education systems.

He also called for a transformation towards a “culture of democracy” in the Middle East and North Africa.

“This transformation ... will take time, but it is fundamental to democracy and to answering peoples’ calls for representative, functioning, efficient governments,” Mr. Al-Nasser said, stressing that the United Nations has much to offer in mobilizing political will and international support for countries facing the challenge of democratic transition.

On regional security, he said that future stability hinges on finding a lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“The Palestinians cannot be left out from these winds of change,” he said. “It is in the interest of the Israelis and the Palestinians that the parties come back to the negotiating table.”

He also exhorted the international community to work harder to resolve the crisis in Syria, ensuring that a settlement meets the legitimate aspirations of the country’s people.

On culture, Mr. Al-Nasser lamented that the Arab world is “largely absent from the forces moving the world in science, technology, the arts, music, literature, and other fields of creativity,” in spite of the fact the region was once a pioneer in philosophy, science, medicine and the arts.

“Arabs would once again excel if their highly qualified sons and daughters, who today contribute, as exiles, to the development of science and technology in Silicon Valley, to the brilliance of literature and fashion in Paris and London, would find themselves comfortable in political and social settings in their home countries, in which they would reclaim the status of the region as an ornament of the world, the way it was in times past,” said the President.

The region can only excel once again if the freedoms of thought, expression, religion, conscience and gender equality are unrestricted, upheld by all government institutions, and nurtured by civil society, he said.

At a separate event in Moscow on Wednesday, Mr. Al-Nasser was awarded an honorary doctorate – the *Honoris Causa* – by the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences,

in recognition of his efforts to foster cross-cultural understanding and strengthen the work of the UN Alliance of Civilizations initiative.

Launched in 2005 through the initiative of Spain and Turkey, under UN auspices, the Alliance seeks to promote better cross-cultural relations worldwide.

Speaking on the relevance of the UN as an institution designed to find solutions for the world's current problems, Mr. Al-Nasser stressed that the global body remains "as important, as needed, as relevant as ever before."

"It requires some reform. But at its core – our common search for universality, for partnership and for a better world for all – remains strongly rooted and undoubtedly unchanged," he added.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[General Assembly President and Arab League head discuss Syria and Arab Spring](#)