

## MAJALAT Neighborhood South Policy Seminar II

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Concept note

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### I- Background of the MAJALAT initiative

The European Union and its Southern Neighborhood have throughout the years been sharing a destiny of geographical proximity, economic and political cooperation on many fronts. The two shores of the Mediterranean have a long history of cross-fertilization and human and cultural exchanges that had shaped their heritage and shared history and values. Therefore, the challenges hindering the stability and prosperity of the Southern Neighborhood region needs to be shared by creating a global partnership on the economic, social, political and cultural level. The role of the civil society in the abovementioned partnership has been growing for more than two decades, starting with the Barcelona process in 1995. At the beginning of the ripening process, the partners of the both shores agreed to lay the groundwork for a greater partnership, in order to ensure a strengthened role of the civil society in the process that would lead to enhance the relations with regard to political, social, economic and cultural issues.

The need for a better involvement of the civil society in the EU policy dialogue, particularly those in regard to the European Neighborhood Policy, came up in the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings and the changing priorities of the region. The EU willingness to take into account the demands of the region has been transposed in various ways whether internally or externally. Into this framework fit for example the 'EU Global Strategy'<sup>1</sup> which called for a stronger engagement with the civil society in partner countries of the EU, the communication "The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe's engagement with Civil Society in external relations"<sup>2</sup> ,

<sup>1</sup> <http://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en>

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/roots-democracy-and-sustainable-development-europes-engagement-civil-society-external-relations\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/roots-democracy-and-sustainable-development-europes-engagement-civil-society-external-relations_en)



the CSO roadmaps created with the EU delegations of countries of the region, the IISG (Inter-Institutional Steering Group), and the ENP review of 2015. Although the EU reviewed the partnership framework in 2015 and launched a related consultative process including the civil society, the shift in paradigm towards a security- based approach and the focus on promoting societies’ resilience and stability instead of development is considered a regressive measure towards the achievement of the region’s prosperity and peace. In addition, the EU has engaged in a structured dialogue with the civil society, including the Neighborhood South aiming to enhance the cooperation with the civil society in the policy-making process in a consultative manner. As this process is a succession of many previous dialogues launched in 2014, it has defined main priorities to discuss: **strengthening resilience and building stability** including issues such as security sector reform, conflict prevention and preventing/countering violent extremism; **migration and mobility** including issues legal migration and mobility, humanitarian and protection imperatives on migrations and building tools and mechanisms for monitoring by the EU and the CSOs of international response; **reducing inequalities** tackling socio-economic challenges related to employment; the necessity of promotion of social dialogue and **good governance** tackling issues related to transparency and corruption and addressing policies and actions concerning **climate justice** in the region . The engagement of the EU in participating as an actor of peace and stability and its work on constructing a political dialogue is cemented by its engagement to the Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030.

Despite all of the initiatives, CSOs still are confronted to several inherent challenges that limit their participation in the policy-making process with the EU such as the shrinking space, the mobilization of sustainable resources, the access to information etc, and prohibit them from addressing the key challenges that they face and presenting their approach into tackling the above-mentioned priorities and into achieving them. Consequently, one of the main recommendations of the last civil society dialogue in 2017 is a need for a regional hub for structured dialogue by and for the civil society while ensuring coordination with EU institutions; where a regional platform is needed to create a space for the region to set priorities for contributing to regional policy agendas, boost contributions on priority themes, strengthen partnerships, and facilitate the creation of networks to act at a regional level. Therefore, a consortium of civil society organizations working for the Southern Neighborhood (Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), EuroMed Human Rights, Arab Trade Unions (ATUC, SOLIDAR, Réseau EuroMed France (REF), Forum des Alternatives (FMAS) have created **MAJALAT, a regional hub for structured dialogue.**

MAJALAT an initiative aiming at creating spaces for a constructive dialogue between civil society organizations, trade unions, social movements and academics from both shores of the Mediterranean and the European Union, in order to influence the vision and policies of the region.



What are its activities ?

- Research work for advocacy on the priorities of the region
- Consultations with civil society organizations at different levels: organization of national, regional, youth workshops and EU South policy seminar ;in addition to the organization of a dialogue with the EU at the Brussels Civil Forum.
- Creation of a digital platform to allow organizations and individuals to access info on the work of MAJALAT, to network and to deepen the discussion between organizations

## II- Theme Description and Entry points for 2019

### ***Strengthening Resilience and Building Stability – Security and countering violence***

Addressing security and stability issues in the Southern Mediterranean has been set as a main priority in the structured dialogues with the civil society of the region, regarding them as crucial partners in the solution-making process. The EU has strongly emphasized, since the adoption of its new neighborhood policy, on its work on resilience throughout “*strengthening the capacities of states and societies to anticipate and adjust to pressures beyond their immediate control, while maintaining social and political cohesion and without undermining core human rights and democratic principles*”<sup>3</sup> ; particularly in tackling terrorism affecting the region. This approach places states’ security system at the heart of the problem from the EU’s perspective and works on solutions oriented towards the prevention of violent extremism, security sector reform and linked transparency mechanisms. Whilst the mentioned areas of intervention are important to ensure stability in the region, there is a need in understanding the different forms of violence, the drivers behind extremism and working on policies tackling their root causes, specifically with their effects on the youth and women. Furthermore, it is essential to examine the effects of the counter violence measures- adopted by the proposed reforms- on civic spaces and on the fulfillment of human rights at all levels.

### ***Migration and Mobility***

The mutating situation in EU’s Southern Neighborhood in the past few years in terms of migration has lead the union to address these issues in a number of resolutions<sup>4</sup> and policies,

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<sup>4</sup> The European Agenda on Migration, the Valletta Summit on Migration, the instalment of the MADAD Trust Fund for the Syrian crisis response and the EU trust fund for Africa.



materialized by the adoption of different measures inside host countries in Europe and in countries where migrants and refugees come from. These measures vary from mobility agreements (e.g EU-Tunisia Mobility Agreement<sup>5</sup>) to integrated border management policies and to asylum and migration agreements (e.g European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders- Frontex agreement with Turkey). Simultaneously, the EU is imposing stricter and more costly visa requirements, thereby limiting the freedom of mobility of individuals in the southern neighborhood. This approach to the migration crisis also affects aid destined to the region, as it is explicitly linked to the level of humanitarian assistance allocated to the region.

Consequently, it is crucial to evaluate the impact of these forms of cooperation with respect to their effects on civic space and freedom of expression and mobility; whether these measures are leading to an effective rights-based solution to the migration crisis, in particular by tackling its root-causes, which are embodied in socio-economic, cultural, security and many other facets.

#### ENTRY POINTS FOR THE 2019 DIALOGUE

- 1- Social Protection and Migrants' Rights
- 2- The level of engagement of the civil society in bilateral discussions on the issue

#### *Good Governance*

The EU has recognized in its new European consensus on Development adopted in May 2017 and in the reviewed ENP that good governance is a key element for sustainable development in the Southern Neighborhood region. As a result of this approach, all initiatives undertaken in this context are mainly focused on tackling transparency and corruption issues as priorities to consolidate democracy in the region. Additionally, the Union admits the need to include civil society in the monitoring and evaluation of its cooperation programs and aims to work for the enabling of civic space in the region. However, how is the EU respecting the achievement of human rights throughout these actions, particularly that it has committed to a rights-based approach as a guiding principle in its financial assistance? To which extent are CSOs participation in decision-making process effective and ensure accountability? Notably in the context of shrinking civic space on both shores of the Mediterranean. In parallel, is the EU's approach to empowering civil society in the region reflective of the actual needs of CSOs and the challenges they face?

#### ENTRY POINTS FOR THE 2019 DIALOGUE



- 3- Fighting corruption
- 4- Shrinking space for civil society

***Reducing inequalities – Economic development and social dialogue***

The EU’s engagement in promoting sustainable development and reducing inequality in its neighboring region is explicitly stated in its external policy approach and commitment to the implementation of the Agenda 2030. In order to achieve these goals, the cooperation with the Southern Neighborhood region should tackle all aspects of inequality: economic, social, gender, cultural and geographical hence the work on policies ensuring decent work and social protection and a real partnership based on equality, transparency and mutual accountability. In this regard, it is important to reflect on how are the EU’s development-oriented trade and investment policies (Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements and EIB and EBRD investments strategies) impacting job creation in the region and affecting human rights? How is the increasing role of the private sector in the mentioned policies (particularly in Public Private Partnerships) contributing in the development of job creation? What are the repercussions of this model on national policy space and debt? How are human rights leveraged in this proposed economic model and what is the level of conditionality imposed?

**ENTRY POINTS FOR THE 2019 DIALOGUE**

- 5- Private sector role
  - 6- Trade agreements and investment plans

***Climate Justice and Social Justice***

While many developing countries, in particular those of the Southern Mediterranean region, suffer from the consequences of global warming and are affected in terms of marine pollution, deforestation, water crises, food crises, rural exodus, debt and other issues; they are mainly the result of economic and investment policies based most of the time on the non-assessment of the level of exploitation of resources. Consequently, achieving climate justice and social justice require real policy change governed by a sustainable development approach. In this context, it is necessary to reflect on the role of the EU in its institutions and private sector and evaluate to which extent its engagements in the COP21 and the Paris Agreement have been affecting its external policies and impact the Southern Neighborhood region. Is the change at the policy level being done? Do the changes leverage human rights fulfillment?

**ENTRY POINTS FOR THE 2019 DIALOGUE**

- 7- The policy approach to be adopted for climate and social justice



### III- MAJALAT Neighborhood South Policy Seminar II

The MAJALAT NSP II will take place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2019 in Tunis, Tunisia. The seminar will be divided into two days where it will provide a space for CSOs in the region to discuss the developments internationally, regionally and nationally that impact them and to define main priorities regarding EU policies developed by all year around thematic workshops on the abovementioned themes. The process leading to the seminar aims at building the capacities of CSOs in order to outline main recommendation portraying alarming and priority issues that need to be raised in a direct dialogue with the EU in the Annual Regional Civil Forum in Brussels in December 2019.

While the first version of the seminar focused on the launching of the initiative and discussing the status of the region according to the mentioned themes based on policy briefs prepared by experts on the topic; this year's seminar is a continuation of discussions launched at the thematic workshops that were held in Beirut (6-7 April 2019), in Lecce (16-17 May 2019) and Casablanca (29 Mars 2019) in the presence of experts and that focused on two entry points to develop for each theme. At the end of the seminar, outcomes and priorities will be addressed to the EU in order to prepare the Brussels Civil Forum.