



Freedom of Association



Under the Patronage of His Excellency Amr Musa, Secretary General, the Arab League and the Arab League Civil Society Commission



With the Support of the European Union

Subject: International Conference
"Laws' Reform between aspiration and reality"
June 2007

"Enhancing the legal framework of Associations in the Arab World"

Within the framework of the EU cofinanced project entitled: "Enhancing the legal framework of Associations in the Arab World through national dialogue and empowerment of civil society" a first regional meeting took place in Amman 29-30 March 2007.

Arab and international lawyers and experts, civil society organizations from five Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria), parliamentarians, Arab League organizations and Arab NGO networks, participated in discussions on "Freedom of Association in the Arab World".

Partner organizations presented the status quo of the three laws: NGO Law, Labour Union's Law, and political parties' law setting the base line of the project. They identified similarities among the five targeted countries and set guidelines for the future activities of the project in the aim of reaching a common understanding on basic principles for the three laws.

Based on the findings of this first regional meeting, a research paper is being prepared, which will highlight in an international conference articles and provisions in the existing laws in the five countries that are not in line with international standards. Having set this base line, activities and action plans in order to achieve international standards but with sensitivity for the national considerations will be jointly agreed upon.

The purpose of the conference is to obtain support from international and regional networks and policy makers. It will promote the objectives of the project, and bring together the stakeholders kicking off a regional dialogue which will be further enriched through a national consultation process gathering all concerned forces of the society.

Self-regulation mechanisms such as codes of ethics and standards of excellence have been developed in many countries and by different initiatives. The conference will question the effectiveness of these different efforts challenging the progress made in good governance matters such as accountability, transparency, representation, funding and internal democracy.

What are the tangible results? And what are the steps still needed to improve the image and influence of CSOs. What is needed to make parliaments accountable to their constituencies, how to enhance the trust between government and civil society..

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Arab League organizations and Arab NGO networks will be invited to the event as well as Arab and international lawyer, parliamentarians, and civil society organizations representing Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria

The aim is to strengthen partnership between government and civil society based on "Freedom" and "Responsibility, in order to deal with challenges in an inclusive and constructive manner and to achieve a comprehensive, sustainable and effective democratisation and reform process.