

## Europe Urged to Face Up to the Challenges of the Arab Spring

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- Assistance is urgently required – from Europe and the region – or the entire process is at risk
- The young people who created this change must be part of the new system
- It is now time for institution building and the creation of an effective civil society
- “The Arab spring is not over,” said President Valdis Zatlers of Latvia

**Vienna, Austria** – The popular uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa may fail without European support, said leaders from business, government and academia in a plenary session on the first day of the World Economic Forum on Europe and Central Asia.

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“Assistance is crucial,” said Valdis Zatlers, President of Latvia. “The will of the people for change has been expressed in a very visible way.” Now is the time for institution building and creation of civil society – with social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter continuing to play a key role. “Help is required now or the whole process is put at risk,” stressed Mustapha Kamel Nabli, Governor of the Central Bank of Tunisia. He described two paradoxes affecting post-revolution Tunisia: the first is that the gap between societal aspirations and economic reality (a key trigger of the revolution) has increased rather than decreased. The second paradox is that short-term uncertainty has increased even though long-term stability is enhanced – affecting tourism and investment. In spite of these challenges, Tunisia has not seen much external support. “The IMF and the World Bank are not enough – Tunisia needs broad-based support,” he said.

The region should focus on helping itself, argued Khalid Abdulla-Janahi, Honorary Chairman, Vision 3, United Arab Emirates; Regional Agenda Council on the Middle East & North Africa. “The Arab world has over US\$ 1 trillion in assets in US securities – why not invest some of this locally. “Despite differences we all agree that people of the Arab world want and deserve three things: no oppression, no suppression and no repression.”

Ahmet M. Oren, Chief Executive Officer, Ihlas Holding, Turkey, agreed that Arab countries should assist their neighbours. “We need to help young people who made this happen become part of the new system.”

A perspective on Libya was provided by Tarik M. Yousef, Dean, Dubai School of Government, United Arab Emirates; Regional Agenda Council on the Middle East & North Africa. Libya is thankful to the leadership of Europe in supporting the people’s revolution – though it is also likely that Europe’s slow response to Tunisia and Egypt played a role. “Libya needs to build institutions from scratch and will

be looking to Europe for help.”

“The region is not out of the woods yet,” stressed Raghida Dergham, Senior Diplomatic Correspondent and Columnist, Al Hayat, USA; Global Agenda Council on Conflict Prevention. While Tunisia is relatively better off, Egypt is in a fragile transitional stage, key uncertainties surround Yemen and Syria, and Libya needs NATO to step up its efforts. “Much is required to prevent a hopeful autumn turning into a terrible winter.”

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