

Optimism of Arab Spring Clouded by Syrian Instability

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- A “new seriousness” from the international community is needed to find a Syrian solution
- The Arab region is being reshaped by “interconnectedness” and a new regional identity is emerging
- Jobs need to be created across the region
- More information about the World Economic Forum on the Middle East, North Africa and Eurasia is available at <http://www.weforum.org/eumena12>

Istanbul, Turkey 5 June 2012 – Arab leaders called on the international community to speak with one voice and to act with a “new seriousness” to find a Syrian solution. Speaking at the World Economic Forum on the Middle East, North Africa and Eurasia, taking place on 4-6 June in Istanbul, Turkey, **Ahmet Davutoglu**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, said the Syrian regime is “caught in a vicious circle”, which is the illusion of autocratic regimes. It is time for the international community to speak with “one coherent voice” if a solution is to be found, he added.

Fayez A. Tarawneh, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, said there has been “too much blood” and a lack of seriousness from the international community. “The solutions are not there from the international community and I don’t see a Syrian solution because there is no dialogue and no trust between the opposition and the institutions and the army.” He called for the imposition of a solution from the international community, not necessarily using force.

Davutoglu said the Syrian situation is a “litmus test” for the international system. “The situation is threatening our security and the [UN] Security Council was unable to deliver a strong message,” he said. [The delay at the United Nations] means thousands of people are being killed and we do not know what will happen next.”

Syria is an “extremely complex crisis”, warned **Rafik Ben Abdessalem**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia. “Syria is not completely different from Tunisia – the people have the same demands and aspirations. People have suffered from lack of democracy and political freedom. The only difference is that Tunisia and Egypt are more homogenous societies.”

The lack of a unified opposition is a “weak link” that gives the Syrian regime “ammunition” and is one of the reasons the world is not moving, said “, said Tarawneh. Davutoglu disagreed, noting that if the international community sends a strong message of support, the opposition will become better organized. “Thinking about ‘what next’ may become a trap as it creates disbelief or suspicions about change itself. The existing status quo is a source of instability... this should not be turned into a way to [legitimize] the regime.

Dalia Mogahed, Director, Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, USA; Young Global Leader; Global Agenda Council on the Arab World, pointed out that surveys across the region show that sympathies are squarely with the rebels. “In a region known for conspiracy theories, they believe the Arab Spring

is an organic, indigenous movement for change and not something brought in by an external power.”

In the wake of the Arab Spring, the region is being shaped by “interconnectedness” and a new regional identity is emerging. According to Davutoglu, many young people no longer think of themselves as Tunisians, Egyptians or Syrians. “They are questioning the situation in the region, including in Palestine. New technological innovations are leading to regional ownership. They are searching for new alternatives,” he said.

Looking to the future, the Arab region desperately needs an estimated 80-100 million jobs over the next decade if the aspirations of the young generation are to be fulfilled. “This is all about jobs and about creating a better future for people’s children. If we don’t [create these jobs] we are all going to crumble under the social harmony that will break. We need to reignite investment in the region,” said **Muhtar A. Kent**, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, The Coca-Cola Company, USA, a Co-Chair of the World Economic Forum on the Middle East, North Africa and Eurasia

The diversity of the region is reflected in the Co-Chairs of the meeting:

- **Frederico Curado**, President and Chief Executive Officer, EMBRAER, Brazil
- **Ibrahim S. Dabdoub**, Group Chief Executive Officer, National Bank of Kuwait, Kuwait
- **Muhtar A. Kent**, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, The Coca-Cola Company, USA
- **Andrey L. Kostin**, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, VTB Bank, Russian Federation
- **Giuseppe Recchi**, Chairman, Eni, Italy
- **Güler Sabanci**, Chairman and Managing Director, Hacı Ömer Sabancı Holding, Turkey

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