News Release

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

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Slow progress, but no U-turns on the Arab Spring

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- Demands for greater dignity, better services and prosperity must be met
- The Syrian conflict remains a central concern
- Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a major stumbling block to peace and prosperity
- More information about the meeting is available at http://wef.ch/mena13

Dead Sea, Jordan, 25 May 2013 – The Middle East and North Africa region continues to make slow progress in following through on the aspirations of the Arab Spring, but there is no turning back as people continue to push for the fruits of the revolutions they led, said Nabil Elaraby, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. “People’s demands for greater dignity, better services and increased prosperity have not yet been met, but the game has changed and there will be no U-turns as a new generation steps forward and takes the lead.”

Revolutions are always messy, said John McCain, Senator from Arizona (Republican), USA. “When the changes came we applauded them and admired their use of technology, but now the exuberance of the early days has been toned down as we see there is a lot of hard work to do before things will improve for ordinary people,” he said.

Ending the ongoing crisis in Syria is a central concern. For Amr Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (2001-2011), the priority is for the UN Security Council to call a ceasefire. “Prospects are much better now that Russia and the US are talking,” he said. Robert Menendez, Senator from New Jersey (Democrat), USA, said the dynamics on the Security Council do not bode well for a solution using that body. “There is no great option. Unless the positions of key members change, the Council is paralysed.”

Senator McCain repeated his call for increased support, including heavy weapons for moderate groups in the Syrian opposition. “Stop the fighting is a great phrase, but unless we change the situation on the battlefield, nothing will happen,” he said

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a major stumbling block to peace and prosperity in the region and in restoring trust between the United States and countries in the region. Participants from the Arab world voiced their impatience at the slow progress. “The time for concessions is over. Step by step is no longer acceptable. We need to get the roots of the problem rather than address the symptoms,” added Elaraby.

More than 900 participants from over 50 countries are taking part in the World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa. The three-day meeting, convening under the theme *Advancing Conditions for Growth and Resilience*, will focus on shaping the region’s economic, social and governance systems of the future.

The Co-Chairs of the meeting are Mohammed H. Al Mady, Vice-Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), Saudi Arabia; Samer S. Khoury, President Engineering and Construction, Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC), Greece; Ibrahim S. Dabdoub, Group Chief Executive Officer, National Bank of Kuwait, Kuwait; Jin-Yong Cai, Executive Vice-President and Chief Executive Officer, International Finance Corporation (IFC), Washington DC; Martin Senn, Group Chief Executive Officer Zurich Insurance Group, Switzerland; and Mina Al Oraibi, Assistant Editor-in-Chief, Asharq Al-Awsat Newspaper, United Kingdom.

Notes to Editors

More information is available at http://wef.ch/mena13
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