

International Colloquium on Political Pluralism and Electoral Processes

Rabat, 1-3 October 2005

FINAL STATEMENT

The “*International Colloquium on Political Pluralism and Electoral Processes*” was held in Rabat from 1 October to 3 October 2005.

The Rabat Colloquium was organised by Morocco and Italy, in partnership with *No Peace Without Justice* and *Maroc 2020*. The Colloquium falls within the framework of the *Democracy Assistance Dialogue* (DAD) sponsored by Italy, Turkey and Yemen, as part of the *Partnership for Progress and a Common Future* established by the first *Forum for the Future* (Rabat, 11 December 2004).

More than four hundred participants took part in the Colloquium in Rabat, comprising the various spheres of political life – governments, parliaments, political parties, non-governmental organisations, media and academics – from the broader Middle East and North Africa, the G8 and other partners.

Recalling the renewed commitment of the countries of the region to strengthen the foundations of democracy and to broaden the scope of participation in political life and public affairs, as well as the commitment of the G8 and other partners to accompany and effectively support these reforms, in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect;

Reaffirming the sovereign right of each country freely to choose and develop its political system and to promote reforms accordingly and in harmony with its national rhythm, potential and specificities, consistent with the principles of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights;

Committed to the universally recognised values of political pluralism and determined, from that perspective, to promote best practices in their respective electoral systems and to broaden the participation of citizens, particularly women, in political life and in public affairs;

Emphasising, in that respect, the contribution of civil society, in particular political parties and non-governmental organisations, as legitimate counterparts of dialogue in the democracy-building process, sharing an important responsibility alongside Governments;



THE PARTICIPANTS:

1. **Express their satisfaction** at the constructive nature of the Rabat Colloquium and at the spirit of cooperation and of mutual respect that characterised the discussions;
2. **Emphasise** that political pluralism is a universal value that all democratic countries aim to safeguard and strengthen, in particular through the promotion of the widest possible participation of citizens in political life and public affairs;
3. **Reaffirm** the central role of political parties as a driving force of political processes, underlining the crucial role of civil society in encouraging the growth of an active citizenship that can act as a guarantor, alongside Governments, for the irreversibility of the democratic process and welcoming the constructive contributions of all non-state actors to political life;
4. **Acknowledge** the Report of Thematic Session I on “*Standards, status and role of political parties*” (Annex I). Emphasising, in that respect, that the development of political pluralism depends upon the existence of independent political parties, possessing the appropriate resources and legal guarantees, the *Participants* agreed that the governments of the region would benefit from giving favourable consideration to providing or increasing financial support to national political parties, particularly through public funding, as well as the implementation of democratic legislative measures to regulate their activities;
5. **Acknowledge** the Report of Thematic Session II on “*Electoral systems, rules and monitoring*” (Annex II). In particular, the *Participants* emphasised that, within the framework of the political processes specific to each country, an electoral process is deemed satisfactory if it respects the OSCE principles on holding free and fair elections. Similarly, the strengthening of public participation was unanimously emphasised as the foundation for the promotion of political pluralism. Therefore, the governmental and non-governmental actors have agreed to facilitate and encourage it actively, in particular the participation of young people and women;
6. **Acknowledge** the Report of Thematic Session III on “*Access to the media and political pluralism*” (Annex III). The *Participants* declared that free, public and diversified information represents the best way to open up the public space to debate, which characterises democratic pluralism. Therefore, the opening up of broadcasting space and the promotion of equal access to the media in the region were emphasised as essential to democratic development;
7. **Recognise** the need for international and regional funding sources for civil society activities to support democracy and reforms, reflecting a commitment to the principles of civic engagement and democracy;
8. **Unanimously welcome** the Rabat Colloquium as the first high-level meeting devoted to the exchange of views on political processes between government representatives and non-state actors, and aspire to initiate a tradition of dialogue between governments and non-state actors on profound political issues, with a view to the promotion of political pluralism and electoral governance;



9. **Request** that the results of the Rabat Colloquium be presented during the second meeting of the *Forum for the Future* (Manama, 12 November 2005) as an indication of the achievements in the DAD process;
10. **Express their gratitude** to the Governments of Morocco and Italy for taking the initiative of this Colloquium and for the effective conduct of the proceedings, and to *No Peace Without Justice, Maroc 2020* and the *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance* for their important contribution to the success of this event.

Done in Rabat on 3 October 2005