



League of Arab States Youth Forum 2009 **Assilah 15-19 November**



The Assilah Appeal:

- facilitating youth mobility
- promoting youth exchange
- ensuring equality, non-discrimination and the rights of young migrants

An appeal from Assilah Addressing Youth Migration through a Human Rights Perspective

We, the Arab and European youth participating in the League of Arab States' Youth Forum on migration, gathered in the city of Assilah in the Kingdom of Morocco, the Capital of the Arab youth 2009, in the spirit of mutual co-operation, in order to have an intensive dialogue on migration and youth mobility.

Migration is a challenge for young people and we aimed to discuss and face this critical issue.

The forum was organized by the League of Arab States in cooperation with the Council of Europe, the European Youth Forum and the Mediterranean Forum for Youth and Childhood, with the support of the United Nations Population Fund and the European Youth Foundation.

After we:

- have been involved in an exchange of ideas and experiences;
- have taken into consideration the manifold perspective related to youth migration, building upon international standards related to human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the ones applying to migration;
- have addressed the issues related to youth migration according to both a regional and international point of view;
- have reflected about the challenges faced by migrant youth in the fields of equality, non-discrimination, respect of human rights, the right of movement and integration;

we call upon all the stakeholders involved in migration issues, including youth and youth organisations in the Euro-Arab region, other civil society organisations, Member States of the Council of Europe and of the League of Arab States, stressing the responsibility of international and regional organisations especially the League of Arab States and the Council of Europe to address the underlying factors of migration and incorporate the recommendations developed within the following chapters.

First: Respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms of young migrants

Young people are at the front line of migration. As students educated and highly skilled migrants seeking for better knowledge skills and exchange, as forced migrants, asylum-seekers or refugees seeking safety and security, as migrant workers in search for a better life or as children of migrants and refugees often growing up separated from their parents. Young people are also directly concerned as children of migrants in host societies, often exposed to greater levels of discrimination, exclusion and sometimes abuse.

Young people, in particular young women and minors, are often in more vulnerable positions related to trafficking in human beings, resulting in exposure to forced labour and modern forms of slavery. Their human rights are often denied and violated and their legal situation makes the exercise of their rights a mirage. This concerns and affects migrants in European countries as much as in Arab countries, whether they are perceived as hosting or transit countries.

Migration, mobility and freedom of movement are assets in a globalised world. However, migration should always be the result of a voluntary and informed choice. The right to migration can not become a duty or obligation to migration. The respect of human rights – in particular human security and the right to development – in the sending and hosting countries have to be promoted together with the rights of migrants.

Furthermore, we are particularly concerned with forced migration and internally displaced persons resulting from war and conflicts as well as environmental and climate change.

The number of environmental migrants and displaced persons resulting from natural disasters is increasing and punishes more often women, the disadvantaged and the poor which are among the most vulnerable groups. Industrialized countries and societies have a responsibility, in particular as they contribute the most to climate change.

The positive aspects brought by migration need to be visible and further acknowledged, in particular, migration can contribute to developing a Euro-Arab space for cultural exchanges where mutual understanding can be fostered and where stereotypes and prejudices related to cultural clashes can be challenged.

Youth living in European and Arab countries play an important role in this process, given their contribution to social change and their commitment to achieving equality, justice and peace. Young people and youth organisations are indeed key actors in promoting migration and integration policies embedding human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We therefore strongly demand to:

Respect, promote and fulfil the human rights of everyone, including the ones of migrants and internally displaced persons, stemming out from international human rights standards. To this aim, human rights should be mainstreamed into all migration and development policies and specific measures should address the needs of the most vulnerable groups of migrants, including women, asylum seekers, refugees, minors, unaccompanied minors, undocumented migrants, persons with disabilities and victims of trafficking;

- **D**evelop, set up and implement a legally binding framework that guarantees the rights of migrants including temporally migrants and internally displaced persons based on international standards such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Arab Charter on Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Council of Europe Revised Social Charter as well as the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings;
- **R**ecognize environmental reasons as a basis for being granted the status of refugee;
- **G**uarantee the fundamental needs of refugees and internally displaced persons uprooted by environmental disasters;
- **R**ecognize and support the role of youth organisations in fighting against stereotypes and prejudices associated to migrants for example through empowerment and co-operation with public institutions, in contributing to migration policy making, in implementation and monitoring, in advocating for these policies to mainstream fundamental rights and freedoms and to duly take into account global issues;
- **P**romote and consistently develop human rights education programmes and projects through which the dignity and rights of everyone is promoted and recognized; acknowledge the specific role of youth organisations and young migrants in this process, together with governmental institutions;
- **S**upport and develop intercultural dialogue projects and exchanges of young people so as to correct prejudices, stereotypes and selective perceptions about European and Arab societies.

Second: Facilitating the mobility and regular migration of young people;

- **R**espect and promote the right of the fundamental freedom of movement of young people, by contributing to the elimination of the barriers preventing them from exercising this right. In particular simplify the procedures in the Arab and European region to get exit and entry visas, including the easing of bureaucratic procedures and the costs related to the wavering of visas;

- **I**ncrease opportunities for regular migration including temporary, seasonal and low-skilled migration, fight against trafficking networks and respect the fundamental rights of undocumented migrants;
- **S**upport the role of youth organisations in providing information about and in raising the awareness of the different aspects related to migration so that young people can take informed decisions if they aspire to move;
- **S**upport Euro-Arab co-operation aimed at empowering and reaching out to young people by enabling their contribution in developing the human capital in countries of origin, projects should address the issue related to the respect of co-operation ethics and sending countries development needs regarding the highly skilled migrants;

Third: Facilitating the integration of young migrants

- **P**rovide opportunities for the integration of young migrants into hosting societies by ensuring their human rights to work, to attain the highest standards of physical and mental health, to education and to social protection. Similarly, the right to participate into the public life should be guaranteed for migrant youth as well as their rights to preserve their language and culture as well as their duties to understand the customs of the countries where they live in;
- **I**ncrease opportunities for intercultural dialogue between migrant and non-migrant youth aimed at supporting mutual understanding and at ensuring the freedom from discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation of migrant youth;
- **S**upport Euro-Arab cooperation aimed at raising the awareness of the youth in host countries on the positive aspects related to migration and on the contribution brought by migrant youth and youth with migrant background to Arab and European societies;
- **S**trongly condemn and challenge all kinds of populist propaganda, including in politics and media, associating migrant youth and migrants in general with prejudices and stereotypes fuelling racism, xenophobia and intolerance;
- **S**upport youth organisations in providing a safe environment for intercultural dialogue and integration.

Fourth: Facilitating the role played by migrant youth in development

- **F**acilitate the procedures of migrant workers' financial transfers in order to make it cheaper, safer and faster, and duly integrate the issue of remittances into development plans concerning countries of origins and into projects aimed at ensuring employment opportunities for migrant youth in European and Arab countries;

- **P**romote co-development projects and initiatives aimed at the economic and social development of underprivileged communities in sending countries.
- **S**upport Euro-Arab cooperation by providing more funding opportunities, institutional support, development co-operation and the exchange of best practices;
- **C**reate effective Euro-Arab mechanisms aimed at maximizing the contributions of youth migrants into development projects supported by both host countries and countries of origin and addressing key issues in countries of origin such as health and education.

Fifth: Regional and international cooperation

- **S**upport the Euro-Arab cooperation aimed at exchanging information on migration and of experiences faced by migrant youth and youth with migrant background by duly consulting youth organisations and other civil society organisations representing the interests of young migrants and young people with migrant background as well as by ensuring an effective youth participation;
- **S**upport youth organisations in the Euro-Arab region to understand the issues of youth migration and to facilitate exchange and interaction among and between Arab and European youth, through training visits, workshops, youth' and students' exchanges, seminars, conferences as well as other relevant activities;
- **B**uild the capacity of youth organisations in the Euro-Arab region to represent and advocate for the interests of young migrants and young people of migrant background.
- **P**romote to have the World Youth Report 2011, published by the United Nations, on the topic of 'Youth and migration' in order to deepen the knowledge, establish monitoring mechanisms, gain a comprehensive and objective base of information for further activities as well as stressing the importance of dealing with the topic of migration at all levels.

Finally we call upon the League of Arab States, the Council of Europe and governments to develop and formulate human rights based policies and co-operation that promote youth and student exchanges and facilitate youth mobility as well as interaction.

Assilah, November 19th 2009

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