

Brussels, 4 February 2011

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

DECLARATION ON EGYPT AND THE REGION

The European Council is following with utmost concern the deteriorating situation in Egypt. It condemned in the strongest terms the violence and all those who use and encourage violence. It emphasised the right of all citizens to demonstrate freely and peacefully, under due protection from law enforcement authorities. Any attempt to restrict the free flow of information, including aggression and intimidation directed against journalists and human rights defenders, is unacceptable.

The European Council called on the Egyptian authorities to meet the aspirations of the Egyptian people with political reform not repression. All parties should show restraint and avoid further violence and begin an orderly transition to a broad based government. The European Council underlined that this transition process must start now. The basis for the EU's relationship with Egypt must be the principles set out in the Association Agreement and the commitments made.

The European Council saluted the peaceful and dignified expression by the Tunisian and Egyptian people of their legitimate, democratic, economic and social aspirations which are in accord with the values the European Union promotes for itself and throughout the world. The European Council emphasised that the citizens' democratic aspirations should be addressed through dialogue and political reform with full respect to human rights and fundamental freedoms, and through free and fair elections. It called on all parties to engage in a meaningful dialogue to that end.

The European Union is determined to lend its full support to the transition processes towards democratic governance, pluralism, improved opportunities for economic prosperity and social inclusion, and strengthened regional stability. The European Council is committed to a new partnership involving more effective support in the future to those countries which are pursuing political and economic reforms including through the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Union for the Mediterranean.

In this context, the European Council

- asked the High Representative to convey our message on her forthcoming visit to Tunisia and Egypt;
- invited the High Representative within the framework of this partnership to develop a package of measures aimed at lending European Union support to the transition and transformation processes (strengthening democratic institutions, promoting democratic governance and social justice, and assisting the preparation and conduct of free and fair elections); and to link the European Neighbourhood Policy and Union for the Mediterranean more to these objectives; and
- invited the High Representative and the Commission to adapt rapidly the instruments of the European Union, to make humanitarian aid available and to propose measures and projects to stimulate cooperation, exchange and investment in the region with the aim of promoting economic and social development, including advanced status for Tunisia.
