

## Declaration on the Arab Spring

Today, the whole Arab region is involved in a revolutionary process of change, at different paces in different countries. The common denominator of the "Arab Spring" is that the uprising has brought together various groups dissatisfied with the existing system, including many unemployed, political and human rights activists, labour, lawyers, students, professors and trade unionists. A democratic process is taking place in Tunisia and Egypt where governments of transition have been set up before the elections which will take place this year in both countries. Free and transparent elections will be a crucial test in terms of direction and genuine development of the democratic process.

The "Arab Spring" started 9 months ago in Tunisia on 17 December 2010 when Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest of police corruption and humiliation. The people of Tunisia stood up in solidarity and against a corrupt system. A non-violent revolution was overwhelmingly supported by all social classes from all Tunisian regions regardless of religious beliefs. On 14 January 2011 President Ben Ali was driven away by his people, which were supported by the army.

In Libya the Kadhafi regime has been overthrown. However pro-Kadhafi and anti-Kadhafi groups are still fighting in some parts of the country. UNI Europa shares the Libyan people's happiness but is also aware that the country is going through a delicate phase of democratisation.

The current situation in Syria is an outrage which deserves our full attention and UNI Europa fully supports the fight for democracy. Many Syrians are still resisting the Bassar al Asad dictatorship which is using tanks and snipers against its own people causing one blood bath after the other.

The non-democratic trade union structures from the old regimes have collapsed, while those, as UGTT in Tunisia, which were able to immediately connect to the revolutionary process, have become an essential part of the process itself. In Egypt ETUF has been disbanded.

UNI Europa also recognises that the Arab Spring has created a unique opportunity and a new framework within which a lasting peace in the Middle East can be established. The Conference fully supports the commitments made in Resolution No. 14 "Middle East" at the UNI Global Congress in Nagasaki. UNI Europa reaffirms its commitment to a comprehensive peace between Israel and Palestine based upon the co-existence, in conditions of security, of two sovereign, independent and viable States, and fully supports the Palestinians in their recent request to achieve the recognition of Palestine as a State by the United Nations.

UNI Europa will:

- Work to strengthen the cooperation between trade unions, in order to provide an independent contribution to the struggle for democracy, freedom and social justice in the South Mediterranean and Middle East Area (MENA), as well as the implementation of the social pillar of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership.
- Support trade unions during the ongoing process of constitutional negotiations, in particular to assure that trade union rights, freedom of association and assembly as well as all fundamental rights (as enshrined in ILO conventions) are fully respected and that trade union activities by law and in practice are fully guaranteed in the future.

- Support UGTT in Tunisia and is ready for a dialogue with the other two Tunisian Trade union federations and will work to open effective channels of communication and dialogue with new and genuinely independent trade unions in all MENA countries.
- Take into account that an immense opportunity for recruiting new affiliates has been created in the MENA Region. Therefore, UNI Europa will cooperate with UNI Africa in an effort to recruit new affiliates, through in particular organising initiatives and targeted campaigns. Advantage should be taken of already established networks and initiatives taken over the past decade particularly by the French, Italian, Greek, Cypriot and Tunisian affiliates both from UNI Finance, UNI Graphical, UNI ICTS and UNI Post & Logistics. These past initiatives should find their follow-up within the Action Plan adopted by UNI Global Management Committee last May to build a strong trade union movement in these countries. Implementation of the Action Plan will require the combined efforts of UNI Global Union, UNI Africa, UNI Europa and the Sector Global Unions as well as Interprofessional Groups alongside the UNI Global Advisory Group for the MENA Region.