



SUPPORTING TUNISIA'S TRANSITION

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SPEAKERS:

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NGO Al Bawsala

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MODERATOR:

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MARC PIERINI: The West is saying, including the international organisations, Tunisia hasn't done enough in terms of reforms, and Tunisia is saying we have been promised the moon and we haven't seen much, so the blame game continues in a situation where we have western governments dealing with a multiplicity of crises, one after the other – Ukraine and Crimea and Syria, Daesh, the refugees, Libya, amongst other things, and Tunisia is a sort of secondary crisis. It's not even a crisis because things work, but they don't become so acute, the situation doesn't become acute enough for Western leaders to decide to do something big and important on Tunisia.

So, the idea of this paper – and it's entitled, as you know, *Between Peril and Promises* – is that we shouldn't wait, the international community shouldn't wait for Tunisia to become a crisis, to wake up and do a lot, wake up meaning waking up on the side of the Tunisian authorities, producing a five-year plan, producing a number of decisions that we have detailed in this report, and wake up on the European side and the Western side in general to do more for Tunisia.

The one element where we do not ask anybody to wake up is the civil society, because the civil society has awoken a long time ago, and the specificity of the Tunisian revolution is that the civil society is way ahead of everybody else – government and members of parliament or the international community – and when you hear what Ons has to say you will understand how this works.

So, this is where we started as Carnegie and we wanted to underline that this is in the interest of not only the Tunisian people but the international community as a whole that we arrive at a situation where we can achieve more with what we have, meaning financial means and policy decisions in Tunisia, and perhaps add to what the West does for Tunisia – that is, add more financing or more trade advantages – at a time where it's crucial and before the risks that are involved in Tunisia become more acute, the risk being that the youth could be more disappointed than they already are, the risk being of course that the situation in Libya becomes chaotic if the current government, crafted with great pain with the international assistance, doesn't succeed, and if of course the migration crisis, and especially from Western Africa, becomes more acute, and of course underlying all this there is also the terrorism risk.

So, that is where we stand. Carnegie didn't try to propose massively new solutions or recommendations – the specificity of the Tunisian economic and social situation is that it's extremely well documented. The World Bank has worked on this, the IMF, all the European donors, the Commission, so we have an enormous amount of knowledge, intense communication, in particular between Tunisia and Brussels obviously, Tunisia has support from the US government, etc, etc, so there is no lack of willingness. There is just this lack of what I would call benign neglect – that is, we are all preoccupied with so many big crises that not enough is happening.

This being said, I would perhaps start with Kabil because he's a member of Afek Tounes, a party of the governing coalition. He's working very closely with the minister who's clearly central to the economic and social development process, and if you could tell us, Kabil, one, on the governing coalition – it's a bit difficult to understand from the outside world how a coalition with Islamic and secularist parties can work – that's one thing. And secondly, what is the timeline of decisions that the government you're part of and the minister you advise is going to do in terms of decisions to profile the next five years and offer the international community more elements on which they could bring their support to bear.

KABIL DAOUD: Thank you very much, Marc – hello, everyone. I will start with the governmental coalition. So, in Tunisia we have some kind of what we call the Tunisian exception, the specificity concerning the Islamists and the secularists. How much time do I have to answer this question?

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MARC PIERINI: Well, we go by two minutes by two minutes.

KABIL DAOUD: Oh, it will be very fast then.

MARC PIERINI: Yes, but be careful with the word exception because in this city we speak a lot about British exceptionalism and it's not always an easy terminology.

KABIL DAOUD: Okay, perfect. So, I think that the political scene in Tunisia decided that they have resolved the issue of identity concerning the Islamists with the Constitution. It's not completely true, but what happened is in the last election the Islamists who won the first time by more than 35% lost one-third of their voters and as such they have today 28% of the parliament, which means that the issues of the matters of identity are not really a problem today. Today we are starting to work on reforms, structural reforms, and economy, and on those matters we can work with the Islamists. The other thing is it's not a coalition with the Islamists, it's what we call Daish – it means...

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Cohabitation?

KABIL DAOUD: It's a form of cohabitation, yes – and this is why they have only one minister. You have to understand that technically they're the second party in the parliament and yet they are represented with only one minister – so it's a way to say let's learn to work and live together. You lost the election but we are not in a process of exclusion so we will work with you, so we will learn to live together on the long-term, because what happened during dictatorship is that they were heavily persecuted by the regime and they benefitted from that post-revolution in the first elections.

We do not want that to happen again in any way, first because you don't have any reason to persecute someone for their ideas as long as they stay within the rules of democracy, meaning I don't aggress you for your ideas, you don't aggress me for mine, and we can work out. For now it seems that it's working out. Some of the leaders are doing efforts – some others are not. There is still a risk concerning that aspect, but I think that the Tunisian people, as a people, as a country, demonstrated that they are not weak enough to be able to fall to this mind of menaces, so by themselves, with the strength, as I've said, of civil society, of implication of self-awareness of people, we are quite reassured on that matter for the timeline decisions.

For our minister we have two important projects, we have the reform of the investment code and the five-year plan, and they're related to each other because the five-year plan now is about... the main idea of that plan is how to have an inclusive development. Within the dictatorship we had the 5, 6% growth per year, but at the end of the day we saw that it was an exclusive growth, meaning that more than half of the population was not concerned by that growth and that's destructive, so today we are in the process of working on something that will be able to pull the whole country together. We'd rather have a lower growth rate that would benefit everyone than the high one would benefit only a few people, and that we start symbolically with very big infrastructure projects that will connect the poorest region of the country with the richest one, and with the ports, so we have the highways, the railroads, etc.

Once we have that plan it's nice, but if it's not executed it will be worthless, and this is why the investment code will be important. We will have a new organisation that will be there to follow up. We have a unit that will do the follow-up of the projects within our ministry, and of ITI, or the investment Tunisian authority that will follow everything that will concern more or less the investment and will help investors go through the hardships of our administration. You have to understand that we have an administration that is more than 600,000 people – it's 5% of the population, it's 15% of the workforce – so with that you know how difficult it is to change. We can see in the country near this one, France is a

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country that is one of the richest in the world and they have deep difficulties to reform. We started democracy and so it's normal to have difficulties, but it seems that we are doing pretty good on that matter. We did some things and by the end of July all the structural reforms that we promised will be voted by parliament.

MARC PIERINI: Okay, we'll come back to that in a moment and during the questions. Ons, if you could for our audience first say what your organisation does, what is the specific niche that you have, and it's clearly monitoring democracy, as it were, but you're going to explain that in your own words. And secondly, if you could tell us if you believe what Kabil has just said.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Which part?

MARC PIERINI: Well, the part on the five-year plan, bringing development to the outlying regions and so on, all these things that triggered the revolution – the fact that the youth was excluded, the outlying regions were excluded – this is what triggered the revolution, but five years and three months, or five years and five months into it we haven't seen that coming so why should it happen now – from your point of view on it – but first, on your organisation.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Okay. Thank you very much for the invitation, I'm very happy to be here today. So, I'm the president of an organisation called Al Bawsala, which means compass in Arabic. The idea is how to monitor this process in Tunisia, in two ways. The first way is regarding the institutions, how to be sure that we have strong institutions, accountable institutions, especially efficient and really transparent in their way of working.

The second part is how to put the citizen, who is really excluded from any decision-making process, how to make him a part of this decision-making process and included in this process of democracy. So, we work by monitoring the parliament, so the assembly of the representative of the people, by the municipalities and the budget of the state, and the idea is how to make the people aware of what's happening in these institutions and how to push them to make their voices heard, and especially how to make the politicians and the decision-makers accountable for their actions.

This is a key thing in our work because we are used to having a system based on impunity – people can do whatever they want, especially politician decision-makers, but there is no justice – and the idea is to put the pressure on these politicians to be sure that they are going to execute their promises, and if it's not, how to push people to punish them in a democratic way – by elections, by using the democratic ways.

MARC PIERINI: Could you give us an example of what piece of legislation you're currently following and how you do that, how do you convey your findings to the citizens?

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: For example, one of our key projects is the monitoring of the parliament. We are present there in every committee meeting, in every plenary session. We're live to the committee meetings because it's open to public but it's not open to citizens, so we try to diffuse every information. The second thing, it's quite a funny thing if I may say, is we give a kind of rating for the MPs, especially on the rate of absentees. We have a big problem of presence of the MPs in the work, especially of the committees and the plenary session, so the idea is how to put pressure on them by diffusing the information, by making people asking their representative why are you not showing up.

MARC PIERINI: So, you're publishing who is there and who is not there.

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ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Yes, kind of like – and we rate them, so who is the most present and who is the last present, and this is a kind of pressure because media loves that of course, so...

MARC PIERINI: They try to do that in the European parliament but it doesn't always work.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: It works. It works in Tunisia because the public opinion is quite strong and people are really careful about this kind of indicators because for them the MPs are there to serve them, so if they are not participating, especially in the work of the committees and the plenary sessions, so where are the MPs. So, this is one of the things that we worked a lot, and we work on the kind of legislation that are related to our field of expertise – for example, the right of access to information that was voted three months ago in Tunisia, the rule of procedures of the Assembly, how to make the Assembly work better, and now we are working a lot of the law regarding the decentralisation. It's a big, big reform that's going to be implemented in Tunisia because we are supposed to have election in next March 2017, and the idea is it's not about having election but having a new way of local governance, which is a key reform to have real development in Tunisia.

Regarding the second question and commenting about what Kabil said, I have two remarks. The first one is regarding this question of Islam and democracy. I'm under the impression that you are always, especially the Western culture, to try to analyse the situation in Tunisia and not taking into consideration the specificity of the society. It's not a matter of Islam and democracy, are they compatible or not, it's really a matter of reform today, a change. When people take down the streets and they ask for justice and dignity and work, they didn't ask for anything else. The main, main, main demands were about dignity and justice, and this is something that we spent a few years debating about ideology because ideology is sexy, everyone wants to debate about ideology and it takes a lot of time and because people who are discovering each other, so it was a new thing to debate.

Now I think what we are standing here for today in Tunisia, that there's not a matter of ideology anymore, it's a matter of reform – are you for a change or not – and we are facing a big, big part of conservatism, and it's everywhere. You cannot take, for example, the Islamist party and say this is conservative and the secular are not conservative because when we talk about conservatism, again, it's not a matter of ideology, it's about the system – the system, how it's built – and it's built on privileges, on injustice and it's not a rule of law, so today are we ready to really take the risk and have the courage to change this system – and this is what people were asking for – or are we going to say, okay, we are going to be in the continuity of the establishment – we are having elections but with the same results, with the same strategy and with the same vision.

I think it's important to have a vision on five years – projects, concrete projects – but what is more important is to have a vision for 20 years, 30 years – what is the vision that you want to have in Tunisia, what is the kind of objective that we want to achieve. And today we hear a lot of – again, and I'm quite uncomfortable with the word exception, the same, I don't like it, because exception to what? – and when we want to compare ourselves, I'm not a part of the people that we want to compare myself to those who are less, in a worse situation because of course we don't have a civil war so, yes, it's an exception so we are lucky enough to not killing each other.

But the idea, it was not that, that was not really the led motive of the revolution, the revolution wants to have better situation for the people, again, dignity and justice, and today I think there is a resistance to this change and I think what you said – and I totally agree – there is a need for a political will – a really need for a political will in terms of institutions also. It's not a matter of putting institutions but how to make them really efficient. In terms of legislation we have a new constitution, but to have a complete different legal framework that is in complete contradiction with the new constitution, so it's time to

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really evolve this in the three forms. And the third thing is really about – and I think it’s a key thing – is about the administration because you can have the institutions, you can have the vision, you can have the legal framework, but if you don’t have those who are supposed to execute this vision it’s going to be complicated.

MARC PIERINI: Yes, I was going to come to that. Taking the example of the five-year plan, this is going to be voted in July, if I understand correctly, then it will go back to the administration for implementation. How do you, from your point of view, your institution, make sure that it is implemented and that it’s not just simply taken over by the bureaucracy – which in Tunisia by tradition is competent and powerful – and then disappears from public view – are you going to chase them?

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Of course.

MARC PIERINI: Okay.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Of course. Sometimes I’m quite lucid about the situation in Tunisia, but I’m also optimistic because you need to have strong institutions but you need to have strong country power, and the positive thing in Tunisia, that the country power is there, the country power is quite strong here, so when you said that...

MARC PIERINI: Yes, we forget to say that you are not the only NGO in the field.
Yes, we forget to say that you are not the only NGO in the field.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Of course.

MARC PIERINI: You have dozens of them.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Absolutely, there is a lot of other NGOs, and when you said that we are really divest compared to the government, I want to say they are behind us because we aren’t the normal level regarding what’s happening in the world, so we are waiting for the government to spear up for what they are doing.

MARC PIERINI: Catch up, yes.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Absolutely.

MARC PIERINI: Okay. Michael, now turning to an EU perspective on all this, how important for you, for the Commission, is this five-year plan, investment code, after that there will be an investment conference – what are your expectations from the Tunisian government? Of course, we know that there are many expectations of the Tunisian government towards Europe but you surely have expectations too

MICHAEL KÖHLER: Yes, it’s immensely important, and what is even more important is the implementation later on. Why is this so important? The Arab Spring started in Tunisia in December 2010, led to the fall of the Ben Ali regime in January 2011, now we are in end of May 2016, in this period – correct me if I’m wrong – but Tunisia had about six governments so this creates a problem for all those institutions and all those people who want to know where the country is heading.

Of course, we are speaking a lot about security, we are speaking a lot about the breakdown of the tourism sector, but one of the biggest problems, honestly, not only for public agencies such as the

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European Commission, such as the European Union, but also the international banks and private investors, has been over those past six years that frankly we didn't really know what would be the economic policy. We didn't really know which kind of policy of de-concentration, decentralisation, regionalisation. We didn't really know which kind of infrastructure projects of the many that were presented to the international community would be financed and on which basis – what would be the future investment law, what would be the future taxation law, which kind of trade orientation the country wanted to take – does it want to negotiate a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement with the European Union, yes or no – negotiations started in earnest on 18th April and now we know.

So, what I think all the financial institutions and political partners of Tunisia have done over the past years is try to engage as much as possible, try to keep the boat afloat as much as possible, try to help the political transition, and I think our two colleagues from Tunisia here know to which extent, for example, the European Union assisted in the constitutional process, assisted in the election process, assisted with the election organisations and so forth. But, frankly, it is a problem if you really don't know which kind of reform orientation a country has because most of the resources that you can make available have to be pegged to reform agenda, and if you don't know what the reform agenda is then frankly you have a problem. This is one of the reasons why contrary to good will that Tunisia enjoys, if you look at the policy of the major development banks – the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, EBRD – over the past years there has been a very small number of projects only.

I happen to be the chairman of the Operational Board of the Neighbourhood Investment Facility, which is one of these mechanisms where we blend European grants with the loans of some of the international finance institutions, not only international ones but also national ones like AFD or KfW, for example, and I was very astonished last autumn to understand that we had a pipeline of only five or six projects for Tunisia. And this is not a lack of goodwill and it's not a lack of technical expertise, this small pipeline had to do with the fact that in the headquarters of these institutions people really didn't know what the kind of major projects would be in the future, how these projects would relate to the overall course of reform of the country, and whether the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Planning would be willing and able to sign an international loan for that.

MARC PIERINI: Is the situation improving now?

MICHAEL KÖHLER: The situation is improving now, but of course the devil is in the detail. I think we have all been waiting for more than a year on the five-year plan. We now have a plan, which is not sufficiently well known. I am supposed to know the plan – I don't know it yet. There's an Arabic version, there's a French summary. Minister Brahim, the minister for planning cooperation, made a presentation to international partners, which was very much...

KABIL DAOUD: This is not Minister Brahim, only his adviser for those...

MICHAEL KÖHLER: He is the adviser so he's part of the gang, so to say, and this was very much appreciated, but obviously we first have to see what parliament will do with this plan. Secondly, we need to find out what is behind some of the headlines – we do not yet have sufficient information on that. For example, it's good that I understand the investment code is going to be reformed, or it's good that I know that in the plan is foreseen to go for renewable energy, or it is good that I know that, for example, certain parts of the public service are going to be reformed. The question is, however, exactly how, what is, so to say, planned, how can we support this, what is required to support this, and will there be a majority not only in parliament but then also in the entire apparatus that has to implement this?

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So, we're at the start of operations, but in a way the fog is lifting, and this I think leads to a situation where not only the Tunisians try to appeal to international partners but also international partners are queuing up to find out how they can support the process, and this will be the important thing in the coming six months

MARC PIERINI: And assuming there is a plan in July and there is a better understanding between Tunisia and the international donors on what is next do you see EU member states and the institutional leadership ready to put enough resources because, as you know, since 2012 the recurrent complaint from Tunisia has been we've heard many promises – we haven't seen anything – so the famous blame game again.

MICHAEL KÖHLER: The question, what is enough resources? The interesting thing is that this five-year plan comes with a price tag. Mr Brahim is very clear about an amount of I think five billion – is it euros or dollars, I'm not quite sure – that have to be mobilised by international finance institutions in order to help with the implementation of the plan. Now, this is just a ballpark figure, we just have to look into the detail. I think the money is available, the question is will it be available for the entire period and beyond, and will it be available not only for certain major infrastructure projects, which are always easy to finance if they make sense, will it also be available for real reform, and we heard from both colleagues that what is required is reform.

I had a very interesting discussion with Mr Jhinaoui – who at that time was Presidential Adviser, now he's Foreign Minister of Tunisia – that was in last September, and at that time he presented to a group of international donors and partners of Tunisia a number of projects which are interesting to implement, and there was, for example, a high voltage line I think for an amount of half a billion euros or so. Now, this is a very interesting project – however, it was said this high voltage line is in order to transport renewable energy. Now, before we can finance that we want to find out what is the renewable energy policy of Tunisia, so without a policy the infrastructure doesn't make a lot of sense.

The question is can we not only mobilise the resource but can we do that in a coordinated way, and there I'm between hope and resignation, to be honest with you, hope on the one hand because I see that up to the highest levels of the institutions here in Brussels there's an enormous level of good will in favour of Tunisia, and Tunisia's repeated calls for more assistance, not only in terms of finance but assistance to make this a model of democratic transition a success story, kind of a lighthouse for the rest of the Arab world, that I think has fallen on very fertile ground with President Juncker, with High Representative Mogherini, with Commissioner Hahn and others, but also, for example, with those people who work on the side of loans, macro-financial assistance from the DG ECFIN or the EIB, so this is positive.

I also believe that a couple of our member states are making major efforts – the question is can we link this together, and there I'm slightly less optimistic. The Ambassador knows very well that Tunisia has been asking for a long time to get access to EU structural funds. For a number of political, but also legal reasons, this was impossible. Then Tunisia came with a new idea which said, well, if you don't give us access to structural funds maybe it is an interesting idea to create a specific trust fund for Syria. We have done this for...

MARC PIERINI: For Tunisia.

MICHAEL KÖHLER: Yes, sorry, I'm working on the Syrian trust fund as well. So, one for Tunisia, but according to the model of Syria, according to the model of the trust fund that we have for the Central African Republic, and so forth. We tested that idea with member states and, frankly, the

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response was not totally encouraging because a trust fund only makes sense if you pour EU resources and member states' resources, and maybe resources also from other countries into one pot. However, unless you have one or two major member states that say, okay, fine, we give you 50 million, we give you 60 million in budget year 2016 and then we shall see what happens in 2017, unless you hear that you don't start with a trust fund, and we didn't hear that. We heard from two member states – and I don't want to name them here – that they are looking at it with a benign eye, but even they didn't want to pledge any money.

So, we have one third chance now, which is that according to the decision of the European Foreign Ministers and Development Ministers we should now go for a phase of what we call joint programming, so in reality what France, Italy, Germany, Spain and other major partners should do, together with the European External Action Service and the Commission, is now to sit together and find out how in the period from 2017 to 2020 we can attack the problems that we see in Tunisia in a coordinated way, in such a way that it all plays together. And I look forward to this experience – I'm not quite sure it's going to work – but I give you two glimpses of hope.

In 2017 we have on the one hand the Maltese Presidency of the European Union, so for the first time in many years we have a presidency that takes an interest in Mediterranean affairs, and we have the Italian Presidency of the G7, and the G7 have been quite important in mobilising support to Tunisia in the past. So, in 2017, which coincides also with the start of the second half of our budget cycle, we are going to have an environment where a couple of countries that are in influential positions have not only open eyes and ears but also a heart for Tunisia and that I think might help us.

MARC PIERINI: Thank you, Michael. All of this is very interesting but does it make sense for the Tunisian civil society? Is it understandable for the people you're trying to inform about the political process within Tunisia that there are all these donors, that there are projects about to come, that there is international support, or is that just too far away for your audience?

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: For sure when you are talking it depends about your audience. People, usually they care about their daily life, when they open the door or the street is...

MARC PIERINI: Yes, but a high voltage line is not exactly what people consider as improving their daily life, although it may have an effect.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: But I think what is more needed by the people in Tunisia is hope – I think. It's really that things are going to be better, or even they are not going to be better in the two years or three years or even five next years, that they are going to make sacrifices for their kids, that their kids are going to have better chances. And this is something that is quite important because for me the most dangerous thing that can happen to the Tunisian people, that they don't believe in democracy anymore, so the fact that they say it was better before. And we are quite sure that it was not better before and that we are in such a situation certainly because of the old system and how it was built and it's one of the repercussions of this system. The other part is people of course they can understand all this international position, etc, but they really care more about the national position – what the politicians are saying, what the government is saying. When they are going to vote they are not going to vote for the international institutions, they are going to vote for their...

KABIL DAOUD: And the foreigners are not going to vote in Tunisia either.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Exactly, they are going to vote for their MPs, for the government, for the presidency, for the local MPs, so this is the most important thing for them and it's one of the

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responsibilities for the MPs and for the politicians and for the government to explain the situation, that you are not alone in the world. We are in a situation, especially in the geographic situation, that is quite complicated. We have geopolitics that they are quite complicated, we have neighbours that are quite complicated, so it's important to take into consideration, and I think that people are aware of that.

But you cannot expect that much from people, you need to have different level of expectation from regular citizen, from civil society, from media, from the elite, if I may say, and from politicians – everyone has its own level of understanding considering its own interest, and people are really I think interested in their daily life and how this democracy is going to impact.

And I think again what is important to know, that we are also facing a challenge of security, and when we talk about security and we want to talk about terrorism it's not a matter of Tunisia only, it's international, a thing that's happening in every country – you cannot be safe in any country. Today you cannot be 100% sure that it's not happening in this country and we all know that, but the most important thing is to know that you cannot fight terrorism only by the security measures, that terrorism also is taking part from the injustice, from the poverty, from the exclusion, from those young people that they have nowhere to go but to push from the extremes, so this is one of the things also to take into consideration even from the international institutions, to know that also the stability in terms of security of Tunisia is also important, not only for Tunisia but for the rest of the world also.

MARC PIERINI: Thank you, Ons. I think we're going to move to the question and answer session – we're going to take three questions at a time – if you can please identify yourself when you ask your question. And if you sit on my extreme right – I don't like this style, but never mind – please shout because I may not see you. So, we have one here, two – the microphone is coming – and three.

CARLOS VERAZA: Hello, my name is Carlos Veraza – I work for the Atlantic Treaty Association. So, this topic that I'm asking the question on, it was lightly touched on the report, and it's a different overall topic but I feel like it's interconnected when it comes to economics, and that's the discussion on border security in Tunisia, and specifically between the border community and the smuggling network that's been smuggling contraband, legal contraband since the 1990s, but recently has become a haven for illegal contraband such as humans, arms, drugs and terrorists.

So, my question is that the reason that became such a powerful economic tools for the border communities in the 1990s was because it was the only form of the job market for these border communities – it was the best way they could earn a living for their families – and since then there isn't really much options for these border communities, for people to have real working jobs that are taxable, so my question is what can the Tunisian government do to both cut down on the illegal smuggling market that creates a gateway for terrorism and arms, but also give jobs to these individuals who have no other real means to be able to earn a salary for their citizens and their families. Thank you.

MARC PIERINI: Okay. Could you pass the microphone to the lady on your left – no, same row, right here.

PARTICIPANT: Hello, my name is [inaudible], and I'm a researcher working in the field of migration, and as you may assume, my question will be about migration. As the EU is considering replicating the EU Turkey deal with other third countries, and Tunisia being one of them, what needs to be accomplished prior to the agreement with regard to capacity building and strengthening the current system? Thank you.

MARC PIERINI: Okay – the gentleman in the back.

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PARTICIPANT: Thank you very much. My name is Mohamed Raja'I Barakat. I went to Tunisia with some journalists and parliamentarians last September and the situation there is really very dangerous, and you are speaking about infrastructures and money investments. I notice that hundreds of very beautiful hotels are empty, many of these hotels are closed, and I don't think that it calls so much EU member states to stop considering Tunisia as a dangerous country. It's on the blacklist for tourists, many insurance companies refuse to protect or to insure tourists, and it's a problem for Tunisia. And as Miss said, it's not more dangerous in Tunisia than here in Brussels or Paris and Paris and Brussels are not considered as dangerous places for tourists.

When you speak about EU aid, well, let's be clear, and I'm speaking more for my friends from Tunisia, I think now we have to stop considering Europeans as rich partners. When I speak with some Libyans you have the Syrians, Egyptians, Jordanians, everybody is trying to obtain from the European Union funds, and tomorrow we have a very big demonstration in Brussels, demonstration in France is also very bad – I think that our countries have now to thing, to consider...

MARC PIERINI: Excuse me – where is your question?

PARTICIPANT: This tourism is what I wanted to say. Thank you very much.

MARC PIERINI: Okay, good. All right, who wants to start? – smuggling, migration and the rich or not so rich.

KABIL DAOUD: Here we go. First I would like to say something about the remark of the gentleman. I had the visit of some American NGOs last week and the guy came and he was recommended by another guy that I knew, and we started discussing and he said, you know, before coming I hesitated a lot. I said why? He said, you know, I have two young daughters and I was afraid coming, and he said, but once I'm here I'm seeing – we were taking a drink at the bar – I didn't know that places like this existed in Tunisia. I said, look, my friend, I was a student in the United States, and the most symbolic place of terrorism in Tunisia, it's a mountain in the centre of the country called Mount Chaambi – I said you have less chance of getting killed doing your jogging at Mount Chaambi than doing jogging in the suburbs of Washington, DC, and that's a fact.

So, this whole psychosis we have around terrorists is exactly a psychosis, and terrorists know it, they know it's rare and they know they can't do much, this is why they make it spectacular, and the day that we fall into that is the day we start losing because actually you have more chance of getting killed from food poisoning than terrorist attack. We do not scale things anymore, we just get afraid and get reactive, and it's true that there are a lot of problems of insuring people, insuring companies, insuring tourists or whatever, this is a real problem, and today we have to take all this up to a political level.

Mr Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, during the Davis gathering, said that the world needs Tunisia to succeed, and it's true. It is true because today Tunisia, and the exception of Tunisia, is just that. It's not about being less or more than whoever or whatever, it is the only country that represents the way for change and prosperity that is not based on hate and violence in the Arab world today. You have not another country that represents a contra-propaganda to the hate of Daesh more than Tunisia and this is why they hate us because, at the end of the day, terrorism is not born of poverty, you have a lot of poor people who are not terrorists – terrorism is born of frustration and injustice.

So, the people who go and brainwash people to be terrorists, they propose to them change – they say to them we will change the world – this world, we don't like it – we will change it. We also propose change

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– we want to do it. Will we succeed? I don't know – but we want to do it. And we want to do it in a way that is deeply value-oriented. We want to try this tying that we call democracy and that we call human rights and that we call equality and that we call being able not to hate each other to be able to get something, and for that I think that this country deserves to be helped because this message will help everyone at the end.

And we see the impact of the enemies of this model. We see how they hate us, but how they hate here or how they hate in Paris, how they hate everywhere, and so at some point of course we have to be very specific and see how we will do the micro-programme of change here and here and here. But sometimes history has proven that when we take some step back and look at the big picture we take political decisions and then we enact them – we do not try to see how to do it before taking the decision.

We have the necessity of having Tunisia succeed today. We will do the changes and we will do the reforms and it will be hard and it may be a little bit longer than what was predicted, but, hell, France is trying to reform its working laws since more than ten years and they're not making it. In one year we reformed the competition law, the banking law, the Central Bank law. We made the private PPP law and we have the decrees that are getting out. It's hard – it's easier without democracy, dictatorship works faster, but it doesn't pay at the end.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: We cannot combine reform and dictatorship.

KABIL DAOUD: Yes, they do it – no, no.

MARC PIERINI: Don't say that it was better before – we don't believe it.

KABIL DAOUD: It wasn't better before, and it will not be better if we get back to dictatorship. This is what pays. This is the price of democracy, but at the end that's what works. The others, it's illusionary, so if we believe that this is what works we have to make it work – us, of course, but our friends too – and that's easy to criticise. But doing it is harder, and we try to do it – it's not perfect. And to say something about those guys – and when I mean those guys, civil society in general – they do a hell of a job. I use her website when I want to check.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Good to know.

KABIL DAOUD: Yes, yes, I use your services.

MARC PIERINI: You have to come to Brussels to learn that.

KABIL DAOUD: I go to the website of the parliament and I check with hers. So, this works – we are building it.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: But for me this is not working because you are not supposed to get the information from [unclear], you are supposed to have the information from the official website or the parliament or the parliament is not doing his job, and this is the whole thing.

MARC PIERINI: Well, if you have a high official and an adviser to a minister acknowledging that checks and balances work it's not bad.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: It's all about respect.

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KABIL DAOUD: No, I don't agree with you. Actually, I think that modern society everywhere in the world works with NGOs, with civil societies. Some countries you have more than 20% of people who work in civil societies. I don't think that we have to be in the old system in which state is state and whatever, bla bla bla, this is a full society in which...

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Yes, but the civil society is not supposed to do the work of the state...

KABIL DAOUD: And so what is your purpose?

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: The role confusion is quite important here in Tunisia, that we are...

KABIL DAOUD: But, Ons, what is your purpose?

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: I totally agree, my objective...

KABIL DAOUD: So, your function is to be useful within...

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: No, my objective is that the institutions do their work – my objective is not to do the work of the institutions. This is two complete separate things, and the fact that we are existing here today, that for me our role is bigger than to do the work of the parliament, of the municipalities, or I don't know what – my work is really to be able to make sure that the quality of the service is good, that they are accountable for their actions, and this is what the difference. I'm not saying that today the situation is completely... I'm quite glad that you're using our website, this is great...

KABIL DAOUD: Thank you – this is what I wanted to hear.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: But the second thing is it's good, but we can do better. We can do better, and we need to push for better, and this is for me what is quite lacking today.

KABIL DAOUD: How so? How is being able to use whatever forces we have within our country something that is not pushing us forward to do better? How is the fact that I will be using your services because you work well, to be able to see how things are done, not something positive? How is the fact that every single person, be it within the administration or within parties or within civil society, are starting to acknowledge each other are not something good?

You are not thinking about the thing I'm talking about. We are at the threshold of being able to get to the next phase of our society, and this is done because everyone in this country is trying to do so. You are, the parliament are, they're fighting, they're not efficient, whatever, but at the end of the day they did something and they created something, and today in that country we have democracy, and today that country we had a specific transition, and today in that country we had people who lost elections and are still able to work with the people who won, and that is unique. It didn't exist in another Arabic Muslim country before.

MARC PIERINI: Tunisia exceptionalism.

KABIL DAOUD: That's true, we do not have to be in perpetual self-inflicted...

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: I totally agree, it's not...

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MARC PIERINI: Can I interrupt just a second the Tunisian debate because we had questions and we have to answer.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: But we have questions, yes.

MARC PIERINI: Now, we'll come back to, Michael, about smuggling and the informal economy, which has been said to have reached perhaps half the GDP of the country.

MICHAEL KÖHLER: You're really a spoiler, this was so interesting to listen so it's a bit mundane to come back to the questions, although they were very...

MARC PIERINI: But we have to answer our audience.

MICHAEL KÖHLER: I think there is a common denominator between all the three questions and dimensions and that is border management. Border management is key to many other things that we have here, in particular, the management of the border to Libya, but obviously there's also Mount Chaambi, which is at the border to Algeria, and there we are helping already, some member states are helping, the Americans are helping, and so forth – we have to do more. Why is that so important?

Thinking of employment generation in the south of Tunisia where what we call smuggling today in the old days was called trade. There have never been these borders in the past, if you go back a couple of centuries there has always been trans-Sahara trade, the entire south of Tunisia, not only since the 90s, but I lived in Tunisia in the 90s so you're absolutely right, has always lived from this kind of informal trade, and sometimes it was really cross-Sahara, trans-Sahara, sometimes it's just for the next 200 kilometres to the next oasis or so, but these are traditional ways of earning one's living.

Now, today there's a criminal dimension to this, and it's not only trading in this or that, it's trading in weapons, it's trading in human beings, and therefore this cannot continue. The problem is that the entire south of Tunisia, to my understanding, has only three sources of income – one is this now illegal trade, secondly, tourism, but we all know tourism is down, and thirdly it's phosphates, some minerals. Now, this will not create a lot of employment for the future, the question is how can we bring back tourism and how can we get certain forms of investment done in the south of Tunisia?

I don't have a magic answer, but I know that security is key to that. As long as the frontier has a reputation, right or wrong, to be porous you will find it very, very difficult to get either Tunisian or foreign investors to come in big time there, to offer investments in services, to offer investments in hardware – for example, solar firms and so forth. What I would do is basically invest a lot in surveying and supervising the border as well as possible, then think of which kind of major infrastructure can be financed in the south of Tunisia while making sense. We don't need to have white elephants, but we need to have infrastructure that makes sense for the economic development of the region.

And then, frankly, I would appeal to people in the region. There is this problem, and of course everybody looks to the capital, everybody has the feeling that the government has to decide. After 50 years of authoritarian rules of different forms this is just normal – you just look to Tunis and wait for being blessed, and then you complain that you are not blessed enough, so to say. Why not turn this around in a democracy that Tunisia is right now? Why not organise meetings at village level, at community level to say, listen, what can you do? Is there possibility of organised cooperatives in handicrafts, for example, is there a possibility to do something for local trades, which kind of services could play out a role here, and then we come in and help you.

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But this makes sense only in the context of a real regionalisation policy. As long as, for example, Tunisian municipalities don't really have a significant budget, as long as not even the parliament has a real budget but it depends on the budget of the presidency, how do you really want to empower local decision-making, and I think therefore we need to have an overall approach, not only bits and pieces here and there.

So, with that, with good border management, on the one hand we can perhaps bring back tourism, but I would like to say Tunisia also needs to have a real tourism strategy. The hotels are not only empty because of the terror attacks – they're also empty because I think they are no longer competitive. I spent a week with two of my kids in Tunisia in October because I love Tunisia, but frankly, had I gone to a couple of other Mediterranean countries for the same money I would have got better service. There has not been any significant investment in many, many Tunisian hotels for five to ten years and it shows, so in a way you need to have a comprehensive strategy how to overhaul the sector. You cannot always lower the price just to attract this or that community of tourists, you need to think which kind of tourism you want, how to secure it and how to make the place attractive to those tourists, and on migration it's the same thing.

I think there is a willingness in Europe to be more forthcoming with respect to visa liberalisation. You know we have a mobility partnership with Tunisia which is being discussed, and we would like to be open, more open, so to say, with respect to Tunisians, but as long as our home affairs ministers have the feeling that you don't know what's coming in from the countries next to Tunisia it's very, very difficult to become ever more open when it comes to mobility, so we need to do both. We need on the one hand to have more legal mobility; at the same time we need to help Tunisia – and I'm glad to say that we have started to do so – in managing its borders.

And then we have to find out which kind of additional capacity Tunisia needs, and there the comparison with Turkey doesn't really kick in very much because at this moment in time things scored, Tunisia is not a major transit country. It is not located on one of the big tracks of international migration. Of course people are going from the Sahel through Algeria or through [unclear] into Libya, but right now Tunisia is not a major point of departure of either Tunisian or non-Tunisian illegal migrants. This may change, it can change even in weeks, but there again border management is the answer. At the same time we need to help our Tunisian partners to build up migration management structures, legislation, and in a way in a higher system that allows for both legal and illegal migration.

I wonder why Tunisia, for example, does not yet have an asylum law – as far as I know, but please correct me when I'm wrong. I think only Morocco in Northern Africa has an asylum law. Only in Morocco somebody from Burkina Faso or from Niger can legally request asylum, which means that the international donors can come in to assist that person with vocational training, but also with legal advice, perhaps even legal advice on how to get a visa for a European country. This is not yet the case in Tunisia – there we could help. We could help also when it comes to, let's say, reception centres for refugees in case there should be bigger numbers of refugees, and therefore Tunisia qualifies for the new trust fund for Africa. The first board meeting of that Northern African part of the trust will take place here in Brussels on 16th June. We don't have in that trust fund yet any project for Tunisia because on the one hand the needs are lower than in other countries, but at the same time once again there is not yet a clear national policy that we could support.

MARC PIERINI: Thank you, Michael. We're going to the second round of questions – one, two, three.

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ASIEM EL DIFRAOUI: Yes, my name is Asiem El Difraoui. I'm a founder of a foundation in Berlin which is called the Candid Foundation, which has been quite implicated in certain things concerning Tunisia in terms of a Deauville process, and I'm going to hit on the same vein as Michael Köhler at this stage, and as the recommendation of the Carnegie report, this last report, we're talking about outreach. We're talking about outreach in the sense to the neglected parts of Tunisian societies, and as you were just mentioning, Tunisia has a very, very active civil society but I even feel that the civil society is a very elitist civil society, while the political establishment is still also an elite, eventually counter-elite or different elite mixing up.

But a large part of the population don't have any access to the political decision-making process, they don't have access to any economic integration, and I'm really wondering how you're going to bridge this gap at this stage. There have been recommendations but it's not astonishing that some young Tunisians who have been involved in revolutionary activism join Daesh because there's this huge frustration – in large areas of the country still they're totally excluded from whatever is happening in Tunisia.

MARC PIERINI: Thank you. The next question was here.

ROBERT VANDEMEULEBROUCK: Thank you. Robert Vandemeulebrouck, former Belgium Ambassador. I have a question for Kabil, and probably also for Ons, and it's related to a fellow political party in the government, al-Nahda. About ten days ago al-Nahda decided to drop the Islam etiquette from its programme and from the party and therefore it became, as far as I know, the first country in the Arabic world to do so. Now, the decision will take some time to percolate through all the layers of population in Tunisia, but my question is what do you think that triggered this decision by al-Nahda and what does it hope to win from this decision?

MARC PIERINI: Thank you, Ambassador. I would have asked this question myself if you didn't come with it. There was a third question here?

ONUR ULUSOY: Thank you. Onur Ulusoy from NATO. Actually my question is more or less the same, but I am curious about the sincerity of Nahda. Do you think that Mr Ghannouchi is sincere in his efforts – do you think that can we expect a gradual shift in this party or is it just a tactical political manoeuvre? Thank you.

MARC PIERINI: Okay, who wants to start on outreach? Why don't you start, Ons?

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Okay. On outreach, I think it's quite an important question because one of the biggest reforms that needs to be implemented in Tunisia is decentralisation. This is the first way how to push people and to give them means to take part in the decision-making because the first institution that they are going to be in connection with are its own municipalities, for example. We have a very centralised state – it's by history and it's completely normal because when you talk about dictatorship it's also a way to control everything, and if you want to control everything you need to have power and to centralise everything.

Now we are in I think a very, very key moment about this reform. Unfortunately the debate is not quite open yet, publicly speaking about the decentralisation because we talk more about elections, municipal election, more than what are the powers that you are going to give to municipalities, what are the prerogatives that you are going to give municipalities, because again the decentralisation is going to implicate also development and how to open the opportunities for people to invest and to have more freedom to take part in the development of the region, and also of even the municipalities and the regions.

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So, now there is a law that is preparing this kind of reform that is going to be discussed in the parliament in a few months – it's going to be in July that is going to be starting the discussion in the parliament, and it's quite important to be very careful about this reform because it's not about doing elections, it's really about what kind of governance do we want to have in the local level, and the debate is going to be I think quite interesting because until now even the level of the political parties, we don't know the visions of each party, even if I guess they have internal visions and consideration about that, but we are still waiting for the debate about that and I think it's going to be the first way of outreach for people.

About the congress of Ennahda and this new way of doing things, I think why they are doing it, I think Kabil said earlier, when you see the results of the elections in 2011 and 2014 it's quite different, and I think it was a message also from the people about what is the limits they can accept from a political party, and I think this is one of the key elements that were taking into consideration about this new rebranding, if I may say, of Ennahda.

Of course there is international consideration – when you see what's happening in Egypt I think it's one of the things also to take into consideration. But also I think the strategy about... and it's certain that they use Ennahda themselves a lot, though [unclear] means how to become Tunisian, how the parties going to become Tunisian, and this is one of the things that's quite interesting to focus in because I think it's where how to really not be rejected by the system because this is a party that was built by rejection to the system, by the rejection to the state, and it's a way to say that we are in reconciliation with the state. We are now a part of the state and we don't want to have a shadow state or something external to the state or something external to the nation, we are a part of the nation, so this is one of the messages that they want to spread a lot in the society and how to be really a part of the society not something external from the society, not something coming from the outside, it's something Tunisian – this is something really, really key in that. The other part of the other factors I can leave Kabil to talk about.

MARC PIERINI: Leave it to the politicians.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Yes, leave it to the politicians.

MARC PIERINI: Go ahead, Kabil, on Ennahda.

KABIL DAOUD: So I must speak about another party.

MARC PIERINI: Well, from your perception as a member of...

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: The coalition.

MARC PIERINI: One of the coalition party, or the cohabitation party.

KABIL DAOUD: Ennahda needs to be Tunisified because they perceive that they weren't before, so that's an interesting retrospective. They were a part of the Muslim Brotherhood and what happened in Egypt acted as a warning of what can happen within a society if they push it too much, and I think that Tunisia managed to get over that because actually the Islamists in Tunisia were weaker than the ones in Egypt so the rest of the political scene acted as some kind of... they put them down for long enough for them to be able to see what happens in other places. In Egypt what happened is the Islamists went so far that they frightened people and so they reacted brutally and the consequence is everyone lost. Rashed

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Ghannouchi is a smart guy, smart man, he knows when to step back and he knows when to go forward. Egypt acted as a warning in the AK party and Turkey acts as a model. I don't know if the model is still valid today because... but...

MARC PIERINI: We also have doubts in this time, yes.

KABIL DAOUD: But the AK party acts as a model. I know that within Ennahda there are some people who are convinced of this and want sincerely to do it. I also know of people who don't want it at all, and there are many, and I know that there are politicians who try to navigate between both. Their Congress decided to separate the civil society act from the party act. They also tried to make an end to the Islam politic. I think they failed. I'm not quite sure but the information I have is that it was refused so they may have made something blurry.

They have a lot of resistance, even those who are convinced that they need to stop being a theocratic party and being a real conservative party on the model of CDU or something like that – they have a lot of resistance, a lot of enemies inside the party. The problem with Ennahda is you have everything – it's the ratios that are a little bit dangerous. I know that some of the leadership is convinced of this, but I also know of some of the leadership who went to the Congress of Ansar al-Sharia, who are the guys who burnt the US Embassy, and I know that only history will tell us if this is sincere or not, you cannot judge now. I know that some are trying – I know that some are not trying at all – and I know that some are trying to make it look like they did. If I say no maybe it will be closing something that can actually change them for the long run. If I say yes I would be naïve, so we'll see.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Just a precision...

MARC PIERINI: Sure, yes, go ahead.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: A small precision, but it's quite important to know that it's one of the rare political party that they had the Congress. They had two Congresses after the revolution...

KABIL DAOUD: We had one.

ONS BEN ABDELKARIM: Yes, but really with the amount of organisation and how it was organised, and we cannot deny it is democratic in the way that they vote, and even if they have people that they are against and they say it, but in the end at least there's no big separation. They continue on fighting internally, and maybe this is what democracy is about, you cannot evolve in one day, and when you have a history, big history and how it's built you cannot do this reconciliation in one day. But about the sincerity of the thing I think only acts matter, we cannot judge on the faith of people we don't know, we wait and see.

KABIL DAOUD: Yes, wait and see.

MARC PIERINI: Michael, as a long-time scholar of the Arab world do you want to say something on Nahda in the government or Nahda in...?

MICHAEL KÖHLER: Yes, but as Ons and Kabil said, it's in a way too early to call. And it's a very interesting development, and of course immediately one thinks of examples like the AKP – I'm not so convinced about this comparison with the Christian Democratic movement in Europe because there the origins were a little bit different. But I think it's a very smart move – I think it's very clear that Egypt is

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the big elephant in the room, so to say. The Egyptian developments have contributed greatly to the democratic developments in Tunisia, cynically or strangely enough, so to say.

The question whether this is meant seriously. If it is meant seriously it means two things – first Nahda would then really make the decisive step from a movement to a party with all its internal democracy. Everything we know about the Muslim Brotherhood, and we saw that under the presidency of Morsi in Egypt, is that it doesn't work like a political party – it doesn't work with internal party democracy. There are Brotherhood structures, there is a supreme guidance council, so to say, and then there is obedience, there's loyalty. Now, will there be the move to a party that discusses, that takes decisions by majority, as you said, observing the Congress? – that will be a sea change – will be very interesting.

At the same time of course it opens the possibility to party splits, either openly so that really a minority would shift apart and would say, no, this is no longer our party, we really want to maintain the concept of political Islam, we really want to have an Islamic state in Tunisia and therefore Nahda is no longer the movement we can identify with, or will this be done in a way clandestinely, people are simply moving out, reinforcing the radical movements that there are already in the country or setting up new movements. This would be traditional – this happened in left-wing parties just as much as Islamic parties all over the history of parties, and if that happened it would become very dangerous.

So, on the one hand Nahda would become an Islamic-oriented mainstream party – fine, that's great – but it would leave in a way an empty space to more radical movements that are no longer as visible and as controllable. And I think there we come back to the point that our colleague from the Candid Foundation made, if you see – and this has been quoted often enough – how many young Tunisians have joined Daesh, if you see that I think still among young Tunisians, and especially diploma holders, you have employment rates of 40 to 50%. There is a fertile ground for radicalisation if there is not speedily not only credible democracy but also credible job chance prospects for the people, so if these people have the feeling that voting Nahda – for example, if you come from the south or from Kasserine so it's no longer an option that helps you, then maybe they opt for other options that we don't like to see.

MARC PIERINI: And this is also where the responsibility of the international community comes in. We have exhausted our time, but I still want to say a couple of things about what is happening. I'm sure the vast majority in the room has read Carnegie's report on Tunisia, but I just want to remind people here that it's not only a risk analysis that we have produced but also we have produced recommendations on internal coordination, coordination with donors, fast-tracking of priority projects, and of course outreach, as we just discussed.

But a couple more things are happening, one on the institutional side. A couple of weeks ago the president of the European parliament has appointed one of his predecessors, Enrique Barón, to be a special envoy of the European parliament to the Assembly in Tunisia, and Mr Barón has just finished last week his first mission and it will be helpful to help modernise the Tunisian parliament because as we all know the Tunisian parliament was basically implementing decisions taken by the former regime without much of a critical role, without at all a check and balance type of role, so the European parliament is getting in to the act, which I think is pretty positive.

Now, one last word on what Carnegie may do in the future. Of course all the recommendations we have made are subject to sovereign decisions by Tunisia and some of them by international donors so these are not decisions that Carnegie can make, but we have in mind to keep being involved to monitor how things are moving and get more information out to the public.

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This being said, thank you all for being here, thank you for your questions. There is something to drink and something to eat just outside. That will be an occasion for all of you to ask more questions to our panellists. Thank you all very much.