Doha Workshop: "Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts and Democratic Transition"
Doha, Qatar 29-30 May 2010

In preparation for the Seventh Forum for the Future to take place on 01-02 December 2010 in Doha, the Qatar National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) and the Arab Democracy Foundation (ADF) organized on 29-30 May 2010 the Doha workshop on "Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts and Democratic Transition". 110 participants took part in the workshop, among whom are experts, relevant Civil Society Organizations’ representatives from Qatar, the Arab countries, and other countries of the Middle East and North Africa, as well as representatives of international organizations, governments, and public figures.

The workshop was opened by His Excellency Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Al-Rumaihi, Foreign Minister’s Assistant for Follow Up Affairs and Chairman of the Permanent Committee of the Organization of Conferences, H.E. Mr. Bob Paquin, representative of the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Dr. Ali bin Smaikh Al-Marri, Chairman of the Qatar National Human Rights Committee, H.E. Mr. Mohsen Marzouk, Secretary-General of the Arab Democracy Foundation, and Dr. Lauchlan Munro, Vice President of the International Development and Research Center in Canada.

The workshop dealt with issues related to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and democratic transition with regards to several themes. One working papers was entitled "From Conflict to Peace: The Way to the Goal," prepared by Dr. Abbas Arwa, Secretary-General of the Cordoba Foundation in Geneva, one was on "Transitional Justice", prepared by Dr. Mohamed Mhaifidh from Morocco, and one on" The Relationship between the Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts and Democratic Transition", prepared and presented by Mr. Mohsen Marzouk, Secretary-General of the Arab Democracy Foundation. Mr. Gianluca Eramo, representative of the Italian Organization No Peace Without Justice presented his organization’s work in dealing with the criminal aspects of the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The regional workshop participants split into four working groups that addressed the following issues: "The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Conflict Resolution and Democracy

Practical national cases and experiences were also presented, featuring Yemen, Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria, Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, Bahrain, Somalia, in addition to regional initiatives to resolve conflicts, led by the State of Qatar. Discussions addressed the most important challenges and problems faced by civil society involvement in the peaceful resolution of conflicts and democratic transition processes, as well as the most important opportunities and ways to achieve this contribution.

The participants reached a set of general recommendations and practical proposals aimed to activate the role of civil society to contribute with the governments to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the preparation for democratic transition, stated in the following:

**Theme I: The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Conflict Resolution and Democracy Promotion**

1. To enhance the involvement in the peaceful resolution of conflicts and to promote capacity-building and expertise in areas of conflict resolution and democratic transition.

2. To stimulate research and study centers and university research departments to identify the causes of tension and conflicts to contain them.

3. To call on governments to remove all restrictions on the work of civil society organizations and Human Rights activists, especially in the field of peaceful resolution of conflicts and democratic transition, and to adopt the 2008 Forum for the Future Partnership Document principles.

4. To activate what is stipulated in the Partnership Document between civil society and governments, and to urge them to coordinate their efforts, cooperate and build mutual trust between them.
5. To Call on the United Nations organizations, the Organization of Islamic Conference, the Arab League of States, and the Gulf Cooperation Council to make room for civil society organizations to participate in conflict resolution.

6. To consider activating the principle of preventive diplomacy adopted by the United Nations in the 1990s in the regions disposed to witness conflicts before they happen.

7. To call on States, institutions and private companies to allocate funds in their budgets to support the work of civil society organizations.

8. To enhance the independence of civil society organizations from political parties and sectarianism.

9. To build alliances among civil society organizations and with the media, and to reinforce their partnership in the resolution of conflicts and the culture of peace.

10. To benefit from the expertise and experiences of civil society organizations in the field of conflict resolution.

11. To support the work of the Palestinian civil society organizations in facing violations by the Israeli occupation.

12. To assert and strengthen the culture of "citizenship" and combat all forms of discrimination, marginalization and exclusion.

Theme II: Local and Regional Mechanisms for the Prevention and Resolution of Conflicts

1. To make use of the local traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution whenever possible, effective, and productive, and not incompatible with the rule of law and Human Rights, with the introduction of new mechanisms.

2. To establish a regional center for research, capacity building, premature warning, conflict resolution and democratic transition, and accelerate the elaboration of a feasibility study for this project.

3. To urge States to establish truth and equity commissions, to adhere to international Human Rights standards, to compensate the victims, and to develop mechanisms for the prevention of violations.
4. To conduct a survey of national legislation in the Middle East and North Africa, to monitor legislative gaps, and analyze developing legislation to allow for enhancement of conflict resolution.

5. To invite and encourage governments to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the Second Treaty annexed to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 in relation to the non-international armed conflicts.

6. To support national Human Rights institutions in the Middle East and North Africa so as to contribute to the monitoring, prevention and resolution of conflicts.

7. To urge civil society to develop the principles, foundations, and initiatives to build models of dialogue between conflicting parties.

9. To promote the Human Rights, Democracy, Civil Peace and Tolerance culture in the educational curricula.

10. To invite the relevant various bodies, national and regional organizations, international and United Nations organizations to support civil society organizations working on the resolution of conflicts through capacity building and knowledge accumulation with regards to the applicability of international humanitarian law, and develop the skills of civil society activists in networking, trust building between conflicting parties, mediation, negotiation and follow-up.

10. To invite the worker’s community to be an active partner with civil society and conflicting parties towards peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the support and reconstruction of areas affected by these conflicts.

**Theme III: Building Capacities in Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts and Democratic Transition**

1. To develop programs in the Humanities schools and departments in the areas of conflict, peace and mediation.

2. To develop research programs to survey all various forms of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa and map the open and potential conflicts.

3. To establish national organizations and institutions specialized in training on the peaceful resolution of conflicts, mediation, and negotiation.

4. To involve and make visible women in solving conflicts by peaceful means.
5. To build the capacities of media professionals in the field of conflict resolution and the promotion of the culture of civil peace.

6. To encourage the establishment of publications’ and cultural networks and develop specialized programs for schools and NGOs.

7. To develop a culture of peaceful resolution of conflicts amongst the various sectors of civil society, and to emphasize the role of the clergy and religious preaching, by guiding it so as to promote reconciliation and attention to the other parties’ opinions.

8. To focus on disseminating the culture of peaceful resolution of conflicts through electronic media.

**Theme IV: Transitional Justice and National Reconciliation and Democratic Transition Processes: Concrete Applications in the Context of the Arab Region**

1. To encourage States to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and all related Human Rights international conventions.

2. To reinforce the role of civil society in exerting pressure for exposing Human Rights violations, so as to promote transitional justice.

3. To strengthen the judiciary institutions and their role in accountability and justice, particularly with regards to Human Rights violations that occurred in the past, and participate in the transitional justice and democratization processes.

4. To benefit from the experiences of other countries in Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe with regards to transitional justice.

5. To call upon governments to take serious political steps to start the process of democratic openness.

Finally, participants thanked the State of Qatar for hosting and supporting the workshop, as well as for their warm reception and hospitality. They also thanked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Canada and both of the Qatar National Human Rights Committee and the Arab Democracy Foundation, as well as the International Development and Research Center in Canada, for their initiative to organize this workshop.