

Strengthening democratic reform in the Southern Neighborhood



KICK-OFF MEETING – Brussels, 7 September 2012

CONCLUSIONS

1. The participants have endorsed the approach proposed through the Programme “Strengthening democratic reform in the Southern Neighborhood” (South Programme) in order to strengthen the co-operation with the countries of the region as well as the opportunity of EU/CoE joint actions in favor of these countries. It is crucial that this approach foresees, among others, the definition of specific benchmarks in order to measure the progress accomplished.
2. The actions proposed within the framework of the South Programme, which are based on a demand-driven approach, correspond to on-going reforms in Morocco and Tunisia in key areas. The regional actions envisaged provide an opportunity to the other beneficiary countries of the Programme too.
3. Exchanges between the participants have confirmed the interest of some beneficiary countries regarding the “Special status”, which is currently being discussed at the CoE.
4. The consolidation of an operational presence of the Council of Europe in Morocco and Tunisia is key to ensure the implementation and the efficient on-going assessment of the different activities.
5. The highest internal (at the level of the different departments of the Council of Europe involved) and external (with respect to the European Union Delegations and the other actors on the spot) coherence of the Action has to be ensured. This overall coherence will be notably ensured through co-operation and complementarity of the actions.
6. With a view to ensuring coordination between the EU and the CoE, it is agreed to explore the possibility for the CoE to be involved in the work of those bodies which have been set up within the framework of the Action Plans EU-Southern Neighborhood countries, especially Morocco, such as the Sub-Committee on Human Rights and Democracy and the Sub-Committee on Justice and Security.
7. Regional co-operation among Southern Neighborhood countries and the CoE, on the one hand, and among these states, on the other, has to be strengthened. The setting up of networks involving these countries and their integration into existing ones has to be encouraged.
8. Each beneficiary country is invited to appoint a “national contact point”. The exchange of information between them would be very useful in the initial stage of implementation of the Programme.
9. It is imperative to ensure the utmost visibility of the Action, namely through “success stories”.

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