

Developing Arab League

Egypt presented in July 2003 an initiative aimed at protecting the Arab system and activating the Arab League. Egypt expressed hope that the ideas mentioned in the initiative would activate a true Arab dialogue to form an applicable clear vision for enhancing the joint Arab action in light of the difficult challenges that face the Arab nation.

The Egyptian initiative begins with the assertion that the Arab League, despite obvious flaws, has played a vital role in the Arab system, particularly in the 50s and 60s. The Egyptian initiative maintained that the weaknesses of the League are a result of its being an inter-governmental regional organization that has no effective authority over its member countries.

The Egyptian initiative focused primarily on improving the political and legal framework of the League, and on galvanizing the Arab political will through the following principles:

- 1) Improving inter-Arab relations, eliminating animosities, and settling disputes to help save the Arab system, while strengthening its primary institution: the Arab League.
- 2) Activating the role of the Arab League as the primary vehicle for joint Arab action, and reevaluating the effect of parallel Arab institutions on the performance and status of the League.
- 3) Creating an Arab court of justice to settle disputes and adopting effective conflict prevention mechanisms.
- 4) Effort must be made to deepen Arab economic integration using innovative ideas such as creating a mechanism for attaining progress in this direction, committees to coordinate between comparable economic sectors in Arab countries and the inclusion of the private sector in this area.

5) Establishing an Arab Parliament. MPs may be chosen from existing Arab representative assemblies, through direct elections, or through a combination of both. This Parliament would be responsible for watching over the different units of the League and drafting its general policies, in addition to judicial and fiscal monitoring.

6) Setting up an Arab National Security System through one of the following mechanisms:

- Forming an Arab Security Council comparable to other national and regional organizations, but without the hindrances created by veto rights and unanimous voting.
- Forming an Arab National Security Forum, including defense and security officials and strategic experts. This forum would allow for the discussion of security issues and sources of threat and conflict within a general Arab framework.

7) Supporting specialized Arab organizations that reflect cultural and economic ties among the Arab states. These organizations must undergo a comprehensive assessment and evaluation. New functional organizations with optional membership, working under the umbrella of the Arab League should also be established.

8) Connecting the League to Arab civil society organizations and amending the League's charter to orient it towards the goal of creating relationships with non-governmental organizations.

9) Modifying the voting system within the institutions of the League. The unanimity rule has paralyzed the League and other approaches to voting need to be considered such as the different types of majority vote.

10) Adopting the collective diplomacy approach. The Arab League must speak on behalf of all Arab countries. This can be achieved through the creation of a committee charged with Arab collective diplomatic action.

11) Improving and supporting the General Secretariat of the League. The Secretariat can be strengthened by improving its human resources, achieving a more balanced geographical distribution and freeing it from financial constraints.