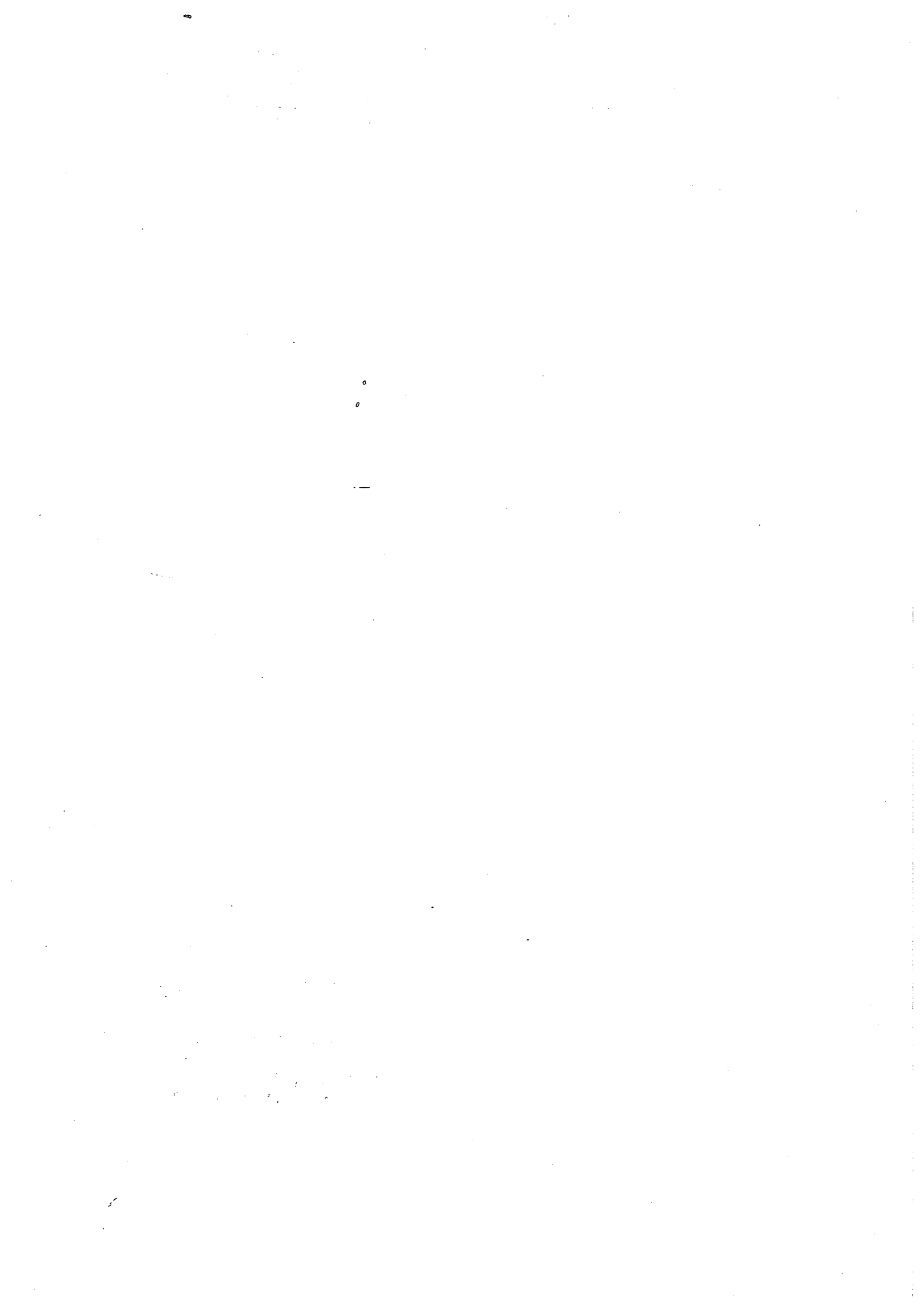




ARAB NGO NETWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT

**The Participation
of the Arab NGO Network
for Development**



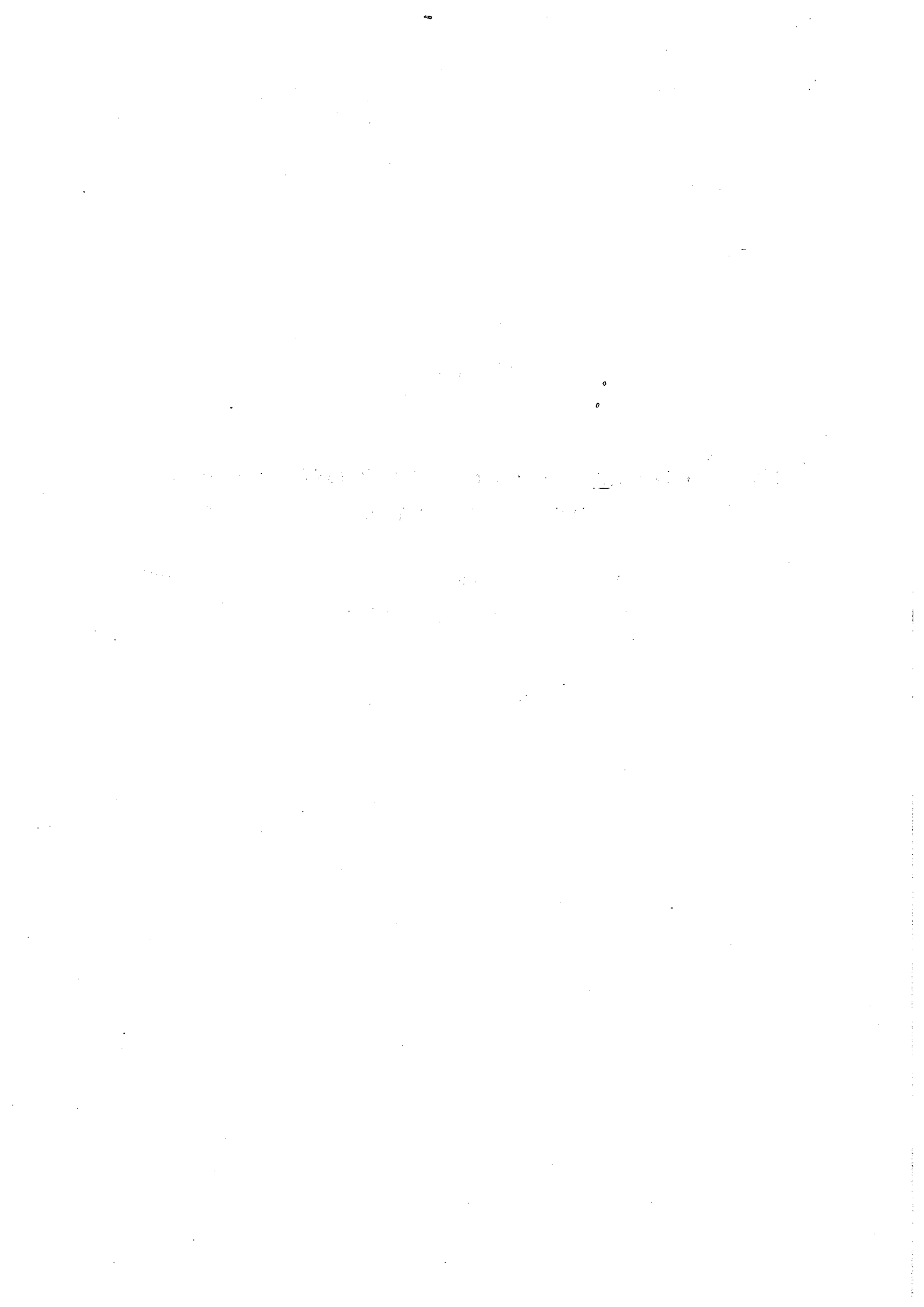
Report

The Participation of the Arab NGO Network for Development

In the
2nd Moroccan Social Forum

July 27th - 28th - 29th, 2004





Introduction:

The second Moroccan Social Forum gathered in Rabat between the 27th and 29th of July 2004, after it was organized for the first time in 2003, in Bouznika. The Forum represents a significant and distinctive experience in the Arab region, where civil society groups are slowly, but surely, opening up to the experiences of the social forums. The agenda of the Forum covered issues of neo-liberal globalization and human development, women's rights, geopolitical changes, democracy and public freedoms, cultural dimensions, environment and sustainable development, migration, and the dynamics of the Arab social movement.

The MSF 2004 was enriched by the organization of the 1st Youth Moroccan Social Forum. The youth forum discussed various issues from the perspective of youths, including issues of religion, education, arts and culture, volunteerism, media, immigration, war, human rights, sexuality, and others. In addition, the MSF hosted several cultural and artistic events, and opened space for participants to exhibit materials that represent their own background, organization, country, case....

The bulk of participants in the MSF were from Morocco, but the issues discussed could not be limited by one country; they were issues that impacted the lives of each one of the citizens of the Arab countries and each civil society activist. The importance of this Forum lies in the space that it made available for more than a thousand of interested and committed civil society activists to meet. Yet, their gathering was made special and more

significant by the enthusiasm of each to hear the other and to share experiences with each other. The people one meets at the MSF usually have many questions for the other; about the country or region one comes from, about the issues one reads about, write about, or work on.

In general, the MSF gives a handy push for the development of the social movement in the Arab region. Definitely, more participants from the Arab region ought to take part in this significant event. As much as Arab participation supports and enriches the experience of the MSF, it is definite that taking part in the MSF gives each participant a new push in his activism and in finding a place and meaning within a bigger picture of an Arab social movement.

The MSF 2004 gathered around 1500 participant, including around 100 participants from various Arab countries including Tunisia, Lebanon, Syria, Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, Sudan, and Palestine. In addition, the MSF was attended by a group of foreign civil society groups, and was marked by the participation and opening notes of the Palestinian activist, Dr. Moustapha El Barghouti, and the Chilean activist and representative of the International Committee of the WSF, Mr. Gustavo Martin.

The Arab NGO Network for Development participated in the MSF through organizing the participation of a group of 30 Arab activists, including 13 young participants, coming from 10 Arab countries. In addition, ANND organized two conferences and three workshops, including:

- 1.A conference on the **Future of the Arab Social Movement"**
- 2.A workshop on **"Mainstreaming Youths' Issues in the Millennium Development Goals Campaign"**
- 3.A workshop on the **"Impact of War on Youth"**
- 4.A workshop on the **"Crisis in Darfur, Sudan"**

1. Conference on "The Future of the Arab Social Movement"

The conference was moderated by Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad, the executive director of the Arab NGO Network for Development. Mr. Abdel Samad opened the session by noting that the conference was a follow-up for several discussion meetings that ANND had organized around issues and dynamics related to the Arab social movement. Since 2002, ANND has been involved with various Arab groups in launching the preparatory process for the organization of the Arab Social Forum (ArSF).

During the World Social Forum (WSF) 2003 in Porto Alegre, the debate concentrated on whether there is a need for an Arab Social Forum (ArSF) or not, where Arab participants agreed that the gathering of an ArSF is essential and important for enhancing the debate around the challenges and the role of civil society organizations in the Arab region. However, they all agreed that an ArSF needs time to mature and to convene in a healthy and productive way. In 2004, during the fourth WSF held in Mumbai, issues core to the progress towards the ArSF were furthermore discussed. These included the challenges of development in the Arab Region and the future of the Arab Social Movement, under which issues of development, human rights, democracy, the social movement, and civil society were discussed. In addition, organizational and conceptual processes of the ArSF were introduced, including highlights from national social forum experiences and processes in several Arab countries.

Mr. Abdel Samad added that the idea of an ArSF, which holds

principles in the same line as the WSF and stems from the need to regionalize the WSF, has been developing with every convening of the WSF. Accordingly, the MSF, which is a national manifestation of the WSF, presented a unique opportunity for all groups involved and interested in the processes of the ArSF to carry on the preparations and the debate a step forward.

Accordingly, the workshop on the "Future of the Arab Social Movement" aimed at highlighting and discussing issues which have surfaced as main challenges and debatable questions since the beginning of discussions regarding the ArSF.

The workshop included three presentations:

A. The first presentation was on political parties within civil society, highlighting the role of civil society organizations and that of political parties and their relationship in the Arab region. This presentation was given by Ms. Niamat Koko, a civil society activist and researcher from the Sudani Gender Center for Research and Development.

The presented paper explored the various roles of political parties and civil society organizations (complementary or other) within the understandings of the Arab Social movement. It shed some light on the debate concerning the relation between political parties and social forums, highlighting the justification of the WSF for not including political parties and addressed the issue in the context of the situation in the Arab Region. Accordingly, it discussed the experience of political organizations in the Arab countries and that of civil society organizations given the challenges of the region (conflicts, undemocratic practices, socio-economic conditions...).

Ms. Koko explained that the role of civil society was becoming increasingly important as structural changes in the role of the governments and that of the people- social movements- came

about. As polarization was increasing in the world, the people tried to push for building a social movement in order to retain their rights within a globalized system. Global society emerged as a unilateral power that is dependent on instruments of finance and technology to ensure its power and control over the regional and national dynamics around the world. This process led to a weakening of sovereignty while more control was being imposed on governments in the name of international legitimacy. Accordingly, as states were increasingly operating independently from their people, social movements started emerging and building their structures and institutions in a quest to establish a new reality based on concepts of human rights, public freedoms, and social justice. Accordingly, the role of civil society organizations and political parties became of more importance in light of the historic development of the Arab social movement.

Furthermore, Ms. Koko discussed the role of political parties as a main institution of civil society for the future of the Arab social movement. Consequently, the paper included 4 main focus points:

- The concept and understanding of civil society and political parties; where Ms. Koko looked upon the role of political parties in light of these understandings, in which they represent major players in the development of the Arab social movement.
- The social factors for a social movement; whereby Ms. Koko went over the factors essential for building an effective and strong Arab social movement, given the opportunities and challenges facing the Arab people.
- The future of the political parties; where she stressed the importance of the leadership role of political parties given their ideological and intellectual capacities for mobilizing people, in a quest for reenergizing and restructuring the Arab civil society.

- Visions for the future of an Arab social movement; through which Ms. Koko talked about the challenges and opportunities to build a people's movement in the Arab region that overcomes all the limitation set on social practices in the Arab countries and restore the ability to introduce a new reality for the Arab people.

*For the whole text of the paper, please check the website at:
<http://www.annd.org/Morocco%20Social%20Forum/Main.asp>*

B. The second presentation explored the partnerships within civil society and the role of international civil society organizations in the Region and their relationship with other local and regional civil society organizations. The presentation was given by Mr. Izz Deen El- Asbahi from the Yemeni Human Rights Information and Training Center.

The presentation discussed the changing roles of Arab civil society organizations and the need to convene agendas and build coalitions in face of the challenges they are facing. It highlighted the areas of partnerships that exist between Arab and international civil society organizations, and the international campaigns that exist in the Region. In addition, it went over the questionable issues of partnerships and collaboration between Arab and international civil society organizations, including the issues of funding.

Mr. El-Asbahi concentrated in his presentation on discussing Arab civil society organizations through the experience of human rights organizations, based on two main assumptions:

1. Human rights organizations are leading organizations in Arab civil society
2. Human rights organizations are more present and active compared to other actors of Arab civil society

Mr. El-Asbahi started his presentation by explaining that the 1967 defeat and the failure of the political movement in the Arab region was followed by the rise of a new international voice that came with the 20th anniversary of the Human Rights Charter. In the beginning, the activities of human rights organizations were linked to the struggle against the Zionist movement and the quest for the rights of the Arab citizen within the implications of this struggle.

The Arab Institution for Human Rights was established in 1979 in Limasol in Cyprus. Later, more human rights organizations were established in each of Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, and Morocco.

Yet, in general there was, and still is, a core problem in the relationship between the state and civil society organizations in the Region. Arab governments did not accept yet civil society organizations as a partner. In addition, Arab states failed to play a successful role regarding the development needs and liberation movements emerging in the Region. In this context, the challenges facing Arab civil society organizations, which are linked to the challenges on the international scene, include:

1. The regress of human rights in the world as a whole
2. The colonization attitude and movements towards the Arab region.
3. The inability of organizations to find new and efficient mechanisms for implementing their activities.
4. The inability to draw lines between the means and goals, whereby the activity or program becomes a goal by itself, while lacking real and relevant content that can lead to change.
5. The Arab particularities.

Mr. El-Asbahi stressed on three main points;

1. The challenges facing Arab civil society organizations stem from:

- The extent of how much the agenda of human rights

organizations reflect local issues and concerns especially that the conceptual background and the financial funding of their work is international.

- The attack on human rights organizations and civil society in general from the side of the governments, thus pushing it to search for international support and protection.
- A lot of personnel leading human rights organizations in the Arab countries are from the new leftist movements, which are closely linked with international organizations and processes.
- The change of the agenda given the changes in the surrounding conditions and situation.
- The change of priorities in the region.

2. On the regional level, the challenges are mainly related to the fact that:

- There is a colonization trend against the region.
- There is the domination of a western strategy that works towards pushing for its project in the region through working with civil society organizations.

3. Facing the challenges requires:

- Enhancing the presence and activity of civil society organizations, through increasing its reliance on local resources for funding, support, and capacities, thus allowing space for more presence on the political and media arenas.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability, through strengthening advocacy on governments.

For the whole text of the paper, please check the website at:

<http://www.annd.org/Morocco%20Social%20Forum/Main.asp>

C. The third presentation was given by Dr. Allam Jarrar from the Palestinian Network of NGOs (PNGO), who talked about the experience of Palestinian civil society organizations.

His presentation focused on four main issues:

- The historic background of the social movement
- The implication of the social conditions on the institutions of civil society.
- The situation and reality in the Palestinian society
- Opportunities for progress

Dr. Jarrar explained that the Palestinian social movement was affected by Palestine's close links to Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. Palestinian civil society organizations presented a link and middle medium between bedowism, agriculture, and the rural population on one hand and the urban population on the other hand. The establishment and development of Arab civil society organizations was linked to the existent ideologies related to military regimes and market oriented policies.

Furthermore, he talked about the history and impact of the Ottoman rule in the Region for that extended for around 400 years, followed by the Zionist colonization. These trends gave rise to resistance movements, which were related to the nationalistic movements that in turn gave rise to other social movements such as women's movement and labor movement.

The rise of the Palestinian National Movement:

Dr. Jarrar explained that the Palestinian social movement was developing in resistance against the British colonization and the Zionist movement. Thereafter, the Palestinian social movement was developing as a national movement. However, after the Israeli occupation to all the Palestinian land, Palestine became divided into island-like parts; accordingly some organizations were working in what is referred to as 1948 land, others were in the West Bank and Gaza strip under the Israeli occupation, and others were in Diaspora.

The Palestinian national movement was enhanced with the start of the Palestinian resistance in 1945. Later, the movement was

developing with the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, and it was continuously changing throughout the period after the June Defeat and the alliance between the national Palestinian groups in the West Bank and Gaza, within the context of the resistance movement. Dr. Jarrar explained that in the period that proceeded, civil society organizations were linked to social movements in the Arab spheres inside Israel.

Consequently, the stages that came ahead of this period showed an independence of the social agenda from that of the Palestinian Authority. The resistance movement was being built and strengthened through the structuring and framing of the people's movements. As for the latest stage of its development, the Palestinian social movement was linked to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority after the Oslo Accords and the on going Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.

In regards to the current situation of Palestinian civil society organizations, it could be noted that:

1. There exist mass popular movements, including the Unions involvement.
2. There is a questionable relationship between social movements and political parties
3. There is a move towards assessing whether there could be a political change introduced by the social movement; thus there is a current attempt from the part of the social movement to coordinate with the political movement to introduce the basis for political change.

2. Workshop on "Mainstreaming Youths' Issues in the Millennium Development Goals Campaign"

As declared at the United Nations Millennium Summit in the year 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a set of eight goals that tackle poverty, education, AIDS, health, women participation, environmental sustainability, and global partnerships for development. The global MDGs' campaign is currently at the forefront of worldwide campaigns for development. Accordingly, 189 countries from around the world, including all Arab countries, are committed to the realization of the eight goals by the year 2015. Within the Arab Region, there is a growing recognition of the importance of mobilizing efforts and resources within the framework of a regional MDGs strategy that aims at answering to the needs of various Arab countries and populations.

The MDGs goals that aim at:

1. Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieving universal primary education
3. Promoting gender equality and empower women
4. Reducing child mortality
5. Improving maternal health
6. Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensuring environmental sustainability
8. Developing a global partnership for development

Kinda Mohamadieh, a program coordinator from the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), commenced the workshop by a brief introduction explaining that the importance of the workshop is that it gathers young activists from various Arab countries, including Palestine, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, Sudan, Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq, and Jordan.

Ms. Mohamadieh mentioned that the workshop aimed at:

1. Sharing and learning about each other backgrounds, experiences, and activism
2. Introducing the MDGs campaign and discussing the potential role of youth in the campaign
3. Outlining and discussing the opportunities and practical means for enhancing the work of youths on the regional and national levels, and for networking with active global youths' campaigns

She added that the workshop was part of an overall approach that ANND has adopted, aiming at mobilizing and strengthening youths' participation and involvement in various campaigns and processes of civil society in the Arab region. Besides, discussing issues related to the MDGs, the proposed workshop served as a chance to highlight the importance of mobilizing youths on various development issues in the Region, such as the processes of the Arab Social forum.

Three main presentations were given during the workshop;

1. Presentation on "**The situation of Arab youths and their expected role in development**". This presentation was given by Mr. Redwan Bou Joumaa from the Algerian Institute for Human Rights.
2. Presentation on "**Good governance and the role of youth in enhancing policy making**". This presentation was

given by Mr. Issam Khoury from the Syrian Cultural and Environmental Training Center.

3. Presentation on "**Mechanisms for organizing and mobilizing youths within the MDGs campaign**". This presentation was given by Ms. Leila El Wadi who is a young Moroccan reporter and activist.

The opening notes of the workshop stressed that the MDGs campaign presents an opportunity for Arab youths to mobilize and enhance their role in development. In addition to the fact that youth are the groups who will live the consequences of the failure or success of the campaign, it is essential to realize that youths' groups are a major part of today's society. Accordingly, youths' groups have a major responsibility of investing efforts for the success of the MDGs' campaign, which will impact various aspects of their current and future lives.

The concept of development was discussed in the workshop as a basis for rights in its wider understanding especially economic and social rights. Participants also discussed the role of youths and their experience in the Arab countries; in liberation movements, in defending democratic rights, and their position within the political changes that took place in various Arab countries.

The situation and statistics around the conditions of youth in the Arab Region:

The presenters went on to talk about the situation of youth in the Arab countries. It was stated that youths' groups, whose age ranges between 15 and 24 years old, represent around 20% in most Arab countries, including in each of Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia, Sudan, Iraq, and others. Indicators for the year 2030 show that youth will also represent between 15% and 20% of the population in most Arab countries⁽¹⁾.

1 Sources: Demographic Indicators: Demographic Yearbook 1995 (United Nations, New York, 1997). World Population Prospects (United Nations, New York, 1996), also available on <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/wywatch/country.htm>

It was also stressed that the degradation in social conditions are the main obstacle facing youth; tight and stressful living conditions, limited democratic processes, disrespect of human rights, and absence of economic, social, and cultural rights of the Arab citizen. This situation is reflected in around 10 million Arab youths, between the ages of 18 and 25, being unemployed.

Rates of illiteracy are high in the Arab countries; they reach 40% between the less developed and female populations. In addition, there is a significant weakness in the education system, whereby many children are deprived from their rights to basic education. Furthermore, enrollment in higher education is considerably limited compared to developed countries. As for e-literacy, the gap in Arab countries is increasing, even within the same country, whereby the number of phone lines in Arab countries makes a fifth of that available in the developed countries, and computers are available at a rate of 18 for a 1000 persons compared to an average of 78.3 for a 1000 persons given the international rate⁽²⁾. Moreover, the number of internet users account for only 1.6% of the population in the Arab region, which equals to 4.2 million persons only.

As for information dissemination, it was noted that the number of newspapers in the Arab countries is less than 53 for each 1000 persons, compared to 285 to each 1000 persons in the developed countries. Moreover, the public expenditure on research and development (R&D) does not exceed 2% of the gross domestic product, and most of it is spent as salaries. Accordingly, the number of engineers and scientists that work in R&D in the Arab countries does not exceed 371 among each million of the population. The international average in this area goes up to 979 for each million⁽³⁾.

(2) Arab Human Development Report 2003- United Nations Development Program.

(3) Same reference.

The Arab population makes 5% of the world population, yet still the number of books produced in the Arab region does not exceed 1.1% of the world production of books. In addition, translation, which is an indispensable means for information dissemination, reached 4.4 million books only. This means less than one book is translated per year for each million citizens, whereas the same average is around 519 in Hungary and 920 in Spain⁽⁴⁾.

The picture becomes more gloomy as 300 thousand of the graduates from universities (with an undergraduate degree) in the Arab region immigrated to North America and Europe (year 1995/ 1996), which amounted to around 25% of the whole graduating population in that academic year. In addition, more than 15 thousand doctors immigrated between 1998 and 2000. These are just samples of increasing trends in most Arab countries.

On the other hand, participants highlighted that Arab youths have been lacking proper structures for organizing activism, volunteerism, youth programs, and networking opportunities. In general, Arab youths suffer from the unavailability of resources and opportunities to express their perspectives on policies and programs that are affecting their current and future lives. In addition, most Arab countries have still not ratified the 15 major international legal instruments⁽⁵⁾ adopted by intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations system relating to the rights of youth. Most Arab countries have ratified less than seven of the conventions, including Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan. In addition, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates have ratified none of the 15 conventions.

This represents a major threat for the future of the Arab

(4) Same reference

(5) Please see attached the list of the 15 mentioned conventions (Annex 1)

Region, since poor and illiterate Arab youths of today are the unemployed Arab population of tomorrow, and they represent lost capacities and opportunities for the Arab societies. This is why proper mobilization of Arab youths is an essential factor for a successful planning for the future of the Arab societies.

Arab civil society organizations are working towards enhancing a common strategy for achieving the MDGs in the Arab Region, and on the vitality of effective partnership between various stakeholders including civil society organizations, government, UNDP, and private sector. The participation of Arab youths, who are a core stakeholder in the MDGs, is an essential factor for the success of the campaign in the Arab countries. Here, it was added that Arab civil society organizations involved in the MDGs campaign, together with other involved stakeholders, have a major task of providing space and creating opportunities for Arab youths to voice their concerns and mark their stands on development issues in the Region. In principle, participants stressed that the regional MDGs campaign presents an opportunity for Arab youths to mobilize within an organized campaign that have mobilized global partnerships and guaranteed worldwide commitments.

It was noted that the dilemma of development in the Arab region will not be solved except through addressing the whole process of human development, considering the citizen's role in the economic, social, and political processes. Accordingly, the issue of development should be based on a human rights approach, in order to achieve the minimum of developmental needs on an internal level and to successfully expand effective and relevant partnerships on an external level.

Main obstacles for the progress of the youths' role in the Arab countries:

The participants from various Arab countries went on to talk about their experiences, trying to identify the main factors that

impact the development of the role of youth as a core part of their societies. Participants talked about the patriarchal and male oriented systems, whereby there abide an inherited culture of unbalanced power and control in the relations within a family. Moreover, there is significant marginalization of Arab females, which exacerbates the severity of their situation in various Arab countries.

In addition, there is a general repression for the role of youth in political processes. The lack of social structures for youth in addition to the oppressive measures they are facing on various levels, whether social, political, civic, or economic, is causing many youths in the Arab countries to move towards various forms of extremism in their life styles. Accordingly, they often face a problem in identifying their priorities and defining their identity, which is very much linked to their role and relationship to other groups, as well as the rights they have, whether political, social, cultural, economic, or civic rights.

Participants agreed that there is a major need for increasing the forms of networking and coordination between youth groups in the Arab countries in order to achieve a clearer understanding of their role, the real situation in their countries, and their vision for the future. It was noted that the lack of financial assistance and support for frameworks of coordination and mobilization of youth presents a major obstacle for youths' activity.

A specific attention was brought to the conditions of Arab youths in Palestine and Israel. Three Palestinian participants shared their experiences; one participant came from the Palestinian occupied territories, another from Israel, and a third was a Palestinian residing in Lebanon. They talked mainly about the problem of the increasing number of Palestinian youths in the Israeli prisons and the obstacles facing Palestinians residing outside Palestine, especially concerning citizenship rights.

Where are youths from the MDGs campaign?

It was explained during the workshop that the role of youths have been acknowledged as a main factor for the success of policy-making and development efforts in various global processes; in the Johannesburg Summit in 2002 youths were identified as a main working group and as a core partner in the decision making arising from the Summit. Thus, what Arab youths should work on is identifying the value-added that they could present to the MDGs campaign, making use of the available indicators within the campaign and following on the commitments of their government, especially concerning what is being done regarding mobilizing the role of youths within the public policy sphere.

In this regards, it was noted that working on the MDGs campaign does not necessarily require youths to introduce new activities to their work programs. The MDGs are issues that we tackle in one way or another through our commitment to work on development, human rights, women issues, environment, economics, public policy...Thus, what is mainly needed is coordinating the efforts and understanding the opportunities and at the same time commitments that the MDGs campaign provide and require respectively.

Recommendations resulting from the workshop:

- Producing a parallel report to that of governments in September 2005, to present the youths' perspective on the MDGs campaign
- Establishing a concrete relationship between civil society organizations and research centers
- Advocating for revisiting and adjusting laws in the Arab countries, given that, in its current sense, it limits youths' participation
- Coordinating a youths' led campaign on the MDGs within civil society spheres
- Establishing a youths' follow-up committee for the Arab social forum

- Organizing youth activities on raising awareness and lobbying on governments
- Working on formulating youths' position and recommendations regarding global partnership issues (MDG # 8)
- Developing youth's activities and following-up issues of debts and technology in the Arab region, aids and medicines, as well as addiction and drugs
- Advocating donor organizations to link the funds they provide to the enhancement of youths' participation
- Establishing and activating forums and spaces for youths communication over the internet
- Establishing national centers for follow-up of youths' issues and problems
- Enhancing youths' participation in various Arab conferences and meetings, and achieving representation of Arab youths in the Arab league and the United Nations
- Advocating against obstacles that weaken the establishment and mobilization of global partnership for development
- Lobbying on the Lebanese government to improve the conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon
- Lobbying and advocating for enhanced youths' political participation
- Lobbying media for enhanced coordination and more quality programs
- Establishing a follow-up committee for the organizations participating in the workshop and promoting the participation of its representatives in various campaigns and relevant follow-up activities.

Annex 1

The following are 15 major international legal instruments adopted by intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations system relating to the human rights of youth:

1. Medical Examination of Young Persons: Sea (ILO/1921)
2. Medical Examination of Young Persons: Industry (ILO/1946)
3. Medical Examination of Young Persons: Non-Industrial Occupations (ILO/1946)
4. Night Work of Young Persons: Industry (ILO/1946)
5. Night Work of Young Persons: Non-Industrial Occupations (ILO/1948)
6. Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (UN/1949)
7. Maternity Protection (ILO/1952)
8. Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (UN/1956)
9. Discrimination in Education (UNESCO/1960)
10. Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (UN/1962)
11. Medical Examination of Young Persons: Underground Work (ILO/1965)
12. Civil and Political Rights (UN/1966)
13. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN/1966)
14. Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (ILO/1973)
15. Vocational Guidance and Vocational Training: Human Resources Development (ILO/1975)

3. Workshop on "All against War; Impact of War on Youth"

The workshop included three presenters; Ms. Rana Kamel from Iraq, Ms. Haya Gaith from the Palestinian NGO Network, and Mr. Mohamad Jaber from the Youth Center for Training and Resources in Lebanon. The workshop was moderated by Mr. Ahmed Abdirrahmane from the Palestinian Student Committee in Quebec.

1) First presentation:

After introductions of the presenters, the participant from Iraq proceeded to talk about the current situation in Iraq and the security problem which is limiting the activities of civilians in general. She talked about the American misconduct and the impact of that on the lives of young Iraqis. She stressed on the problems facing Iraqi youths in attaining a proper educational training. In this regard, she explained that besides the security problems that limit the access of children and youth to schools and universities, the quality of the educational system is considerably degraded given the limitations set on developing the system since the Iraqi war with Iran and throughout the various wars and embargoes that Iraq went through. Rana added that Iraqi youths have been deprived of the ability to exchange with youths from other countries. Currently, Iraqi youths are looking towards retaining a well developed educational system and enhancing their role in building towards the future of Iraq.

2) Second presentation:

Afterwards, Mohamad Jaber talked about the situation of the Palestinian refugees in general, concentrating on the conditions in Lebanon, where he currently resides. Mohamad explained that the number of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is 382,900 whereby 56% live in 12 camps. Many Palestinians live outside the camps, in highly deprived areas, and where they do get UNRWA⁽⁶⁾ services or any other social and health services. He added that the Palestinian camps are highly populated and the living conditions are below the accepted standards given the degradation of sanitarian infrastructure and the spread of waste and garbage around the camps and the density of the buildings which often block the entrance of sun into the houses. As for education, Mohamad noted that the UNRWA schools are not well equipped to serve the large number of children in the camps. In addition, the quality of education offered is very low. Thus, the Palestinian children and youth lack the opportunity to get good education, which hinders their opportunities for them in future. Moreover, Palestinians are not eligible to any social services or protection in Lebanon. They are restricted from practicing 73 kinds of jobs, including medicine, pharmaceutical work, engineering, in addition to taking the post of a director or vice director. Palestinian refugees are also deprived from the right to own property or pass property to their family after death. Accordingly, Palestinian youth find themselves deprived of their normal rights to education and to decent jobs. Accordingly, unemployment rates hit high levels among the Palestinian refugee population in general, and youth in particular.

3) Third presentation:

The third presenter, Haya Gaith from Palestine, talked about the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and the

(6) UNRWA stands for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which is the main UN agency that offers social services to Palestinian refugees.

impact of the wall that is being built by the Israeli government. She also highlighted issues related to the right of return. She explained that youths below the age of 30 make up to 70% of the population in Palestine, which comes up to more than two thirds of the population. These groups are impacted by the limited available resources, the high unemployment rates, the lack of capacity building and training programs that are based on the needs of youths, and the unavailability of opportunities. She noted that a high percentage of Palestinian youth are imprisoned in Israeli prisons. In addition, many families are suffering from the absence of the father due to imprisonment, death, or travel for work purposes. Thus the young members of the family are put under increasing pressures that limit their opportunities to education. In addition, the Palestinian economy suffers severe and chronic problems that add pressure and complexities on youths. The economic infrastructure in Palestine is disaggregated, weak, and unable to answer to the needs of Palestinians, especially youths who are looking for jobs.

Haya added that Palestinian youth are a generation that did not live except under occupation and all what it brings from suppression, aggression, tyranny, land deprivation, cultural repression, genocide, more refugees, and violence. Moreover, it is highly critical what the planned "Apartheid wall" raises of implications for the lives of Palestinian youths and their future. The hopes of Palestinian youth have been damaged by the consecutive failures of peace talks and treaties.

In general, many factors have a significant impact on the development of the Palestinian youths, including;

1. Political aggression; Palestinian youths are deprived of their basic rights
2. Cultural aggression; there are consistent attempts to fight the national identity of the Palestinians and to impose the foreign Israeli ways on the Palestinian society

3. Absence of ideologies and personnel that would have been highly significant in leading and affecting the development of the personality of Palestinian youths; it could be noted that there was a general trend of social depression and loss of hope among Palestinian youth with the failure of the political parties' experience in Palestine, especially the leftist movements that used to hold the hopes of the people.

4. Workshop on Crisis in Darfur⁽⁷⁾:

"A Briefing Session on the Causes and Dimensions of the Conflict in Darfur-Sudan"

A briefing session on the Darfur crisis was organized by the Arab NGO Network for Development as a parallel event during the MSF. The objective of holding the session was to present a brief on the background and root causes of the conflict in Darfur, and to look into the strategic implications of this crisis on the Region as well as the expected role of Arab civil society in this regards. The session was chaired by Mr. Kassim Aina from the "Coordination Forum of NGOs working among the Palestinian communities in Lebanon". It included two presentations by Dr. Hassan Abdel Ati from the "Sudanese Civil Forum" and Ms. Niaamat Koko from the "Sudanese Gender Center for Research and Development".

Dr. Hassan Abdel Ati was the first speaker in the session and he presented a historical overview of the Darfur region starting from the "Fur Sultanate"; the first Islamic Sultanate in Africa -which discredits some claims that this conflict is between Muslims and non Muslims- all the way to the present day situation. The socio-economic, political and cultural characteristics of the region were also highlighted, with emphasis on the two main groups in the population- pastoralists and farmers.

(7) The Summary of the workshop was prepared by Yassir Mahdi from the Sudanese Civic Forum.

The pastoralists, who are mainly from Arabic backgrounds, have been in the region for centuries and are involved in their nomadic lifestyle which obliges them to travel along grazing routes across the region, therefore coming in contact with settled farming communities (predominantly coming from African descent). Traditionally conflicts that may have arisen from this interaction have been resolved through tribal law. Increased desertification and droughts in the region, which reached its peak in the mid eighties, resulted in diminishing grazing land hence increasing the competition (conflict) over already scarce resources.

Dr. Abdel Ati added that the traditional political affiliation of the rural people in Darfur was (and according to some, will remain) exclusively to the Umma Party, which consists mainly of a sect called El Ansar. The present regime, with an attempt to restructure the political arena in Darfur, has been involved in building coalitions with different tribal groups especially the ones who come from Arabic backgrounds due to the relative easiness in mobilization. Accordingly, they lessened the power of the traditional leadership through policies such as appointment of so called Amirs (Princes) within the traditional leadership structure.

Mrs. Nimat Koko presented the position of the Sudanese civil society which views the conflict as basically "Resource Based". She indicated that all attempts to present it as a conflict between Arabs and non Arabs or Muslims and non Muslims are simply not acceptable. Within the framework of diversity in Sudan, it is very difficult to draw these lines but unfortunately the international community seems to advocate these divisions. Mrs. Koko drew light on the atrocities being committed during this conflict especially regarding human rights abuses by all factions towards women and the systematic rape which takes place. She explained the term "Janjaweed" which comes from the combination of "Jin" (Fiend) riding on "Jawad" (Horse) holding a "GM3" (A type of machine gun).

The conflict in Darfur, according to Mrs. Nimat, is typical to many conflicts that may occur in other parts of Sudan if the root causes of marginalization and underdevelopment are not addressed adequately. Civil society in Sudan has also been "marginalized" to some extent through their lack of participation in issues of national concern such as the recent peace process regarding southern Sudan and the same trend is continuing with Darfur. In order to resolve this crisis, a process of comprehensive settlement of Sudan's problems must be pursued hence addressing the pending political, economic, and socio-cultural issues of all regions. But for the time being, it is important for civil society to play a greater role in addressing the grievances and immediate needs of victims and IDPs as well as to document and expose any human rights abuses being committed by all sides.

The discussion that followed concentrated on the role of Arab civil society organizations in helping to resolve this crisis as well as the regional and international dimensions of the conflict. The following summarizes the views raised:

The main role of Arab civil society is to raise awareness about the ongoing conflict and its implication on regional security. Another important role that could be played is to support Sudanese civil society in its quest for national reconciliation through lobbying for the "unity-in-diversity" concept which is a model that could be replicated throughout the region.

The international community and international NGOs (INGOs) in particular played an important part in the marginalization of the Darfur region. Dr. Abdel Ati highlighted on the number of INGOs working in the Nuba Mountains region, which is approximately one fifth of the Darfur area in size and population. He explained that Nuba Mountains has way more INGOs operating there than in the Darfur area, where only 4 or 5 organizations continued their operations after the droughts of the mid eighties.

Side Presentations

In addition to organizing workshops and conferences, ANND members took part in several workshops during the MSF. Two main presentations were given by Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad, the executive director of the Arab NGO Network for Development, as well as Mr. Izzat Abdel Hadi, the Director of Bisan Center for Research and Development in Palestine.

"From Rio to Johannesburg"

Presentation by Mr. Ziad Abdel Samad⁽⁸⁾

Conference on "Environment and Sustainable Development"
The Moroccan Social Forum

Mr. Abdel Samad started his presentation by highlighting that the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed a series of UN summits that took place with active participation of head of states, where they issued statements, declarations, and commitments to fight against social and economic deterioration and to protect the globe.

One of the most important of those summits was the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. More than 147 head of states attended this summit and they issued the so called the "Agenda 21" that included four main chapters, about socio economic challenges, environmental challenges, as well as main actors and mechanisms of follow up. The "Agenda 21" is a plan of action for humanity that deals with challenges deriving from

(8) Mr. Abdel Samad is the executive director of the Arab NGO Network for Development.

the global divide and the gap between the rich and the poor, in addition to climate change due to human anarchic practices. The "Agenda 21" opened way for other environmental conventions, which tackled green house gas emissions, desertification, and biodiversity.

Mr. Abdel Samad added that the process of Rio de Janeiro was followed by a series of UN Summits on human rights-Vienna 1993, population- Cairo 1994, social development- Copenhagen 1995, and women- Beijing 1995; whereby each one tackled specific issues and topics, and adopted a particular convention and plan of action.

In the year 2000, the United Nations held the Millennium Summit, where 189 head of states attended and issued the Millennium Declaration. This declaration highlighted the challenges that humanity is facing, and which are threatening the human kind. It addressed the need to start seriously treating those challenges. The declaration was followed by the issuance of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were prepared by the Secretary General as a campaign for the year 2015.

The Secretary General of the UN invited the head of states to meet in 2002 in a Summit for Financing for Development, which convened in Monterey. Later, the World Summit for Sustainable Development was the step taken in 2002, aiming at adopting a plan of action for the implementation of the MDGs by the year 2015.

Indeed the two above mentioned Summits took place in a period that was marked by two main dramatic changes in the world; the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the 9/11 event.

Mr. Abdel Samad explained that the WTO was established in 1994 at the end of the Uruguay round of negotiations launched in 1986. It was developed as a global organization supposed to organize trade related issues. However, it was expanded to reach other aspects than trade, thus affecting international relations and imposing new rules on the world order. Mainly the WTO contributed to dismantling economies in the developing countries. It built on what the structural adjustment policies of the international financial institutions started doing in opening new markets in front of the multinational corporations.

As for 9/11, the results were the declaration of the so called

"War on Terrorism" without a clear definition of terrorism. This approach justifies all kinds of violations of human rights and imposes new rules and restrictions that support the expansion of the imperialistic hegemonic tendencies.

Therefore, in Monterrey during the World Summit on Financing for Development, it was agreed that free trade should be the main promoter for development. However, in Johannesburg Rio +10, the head of states stepped backward after ten years of the adoption of the "Agenda 21". The Rio+10 was supposed to evaluate the implementation of this agenda and the multilateral environmental agreements, in addition to the adoption of measures protecting developing countries from the side effects of globalization. However, the Summit failed to address the above mentioned topics, which were left pending.

The MDGs campaign seemed to be the main plan of action that the head of states committed themselves to achieve by the year 2015. Nevertheless, civil society organizations consider that the MDGs as a water-down compared to the "Agenda 21" and to the ten commitments issued in Copenhagen in 1995 during the World Summit on Social Development. The MDGs present a modified version of the "A Better World for All"⁽⁹⁾ declaration issued during the World Summit on Social Development plus five held in Geneva in 2000.

At the end of the presentation, Mr. Abdel Samad noted that although the MDGs don't satisfy the needs of the developing countries, they are a valid and measurable tool for advocacy in order to pressure the governments in the developing countries to adopt policies able to achieve the minimum of social justice. In the same time, they can be used as an efficient tool to pressure the rich countries to support developing countries in achieving their commitments, particularly when it comes to the goals number seven on sustainable development and number eight on global partnership, which reflects the responsibility of the rich countries in facing the challenges of development by proposing a criteria for a global partnership.

(9) A work plan adopted by the UN, the international financial institutions, and the OECD countries dealing with development issues in the developing countries.

"Partnership between Palestinian Civil Society Organizations and other Arab Civil Society Organizations"

Presentation by Izzat Abdel Hadi⁽¹⁰⁾

Conference on Issues of Palestinian Civil Society
The Moroccan Social Forum

The presentation was based on a paper on "Mechanisms and Means for Enhancing Partnership between Palestinian Civil Society and other Arab Societies", prepared by Mr. Izzat Abdel Hadi and Ms. Nadia Engels.

Through his presentation, Mr. Abdel Hadi stressed on the need of Palestinian civil society for Arab support, and specifically from civil society organizations in the Arab region. He explained that the paper presented mechanisms to be used by Arab civil society organizations for enhancing development in Palestine. This strategy will be a unique initiative in Arab cooperation and will present basis for democratic change in the region. Mobilizing Arab civil society organizations towards increased cooperation, communication, and information exchange will lead to strengthening both Arab and Palestinian civil society organizations.

Mr. Abdel Hadi noted that it is essential that the support, relief aid, and health services offered to the Palestinians be linked to a

(10) Mr. Abdel Hadi is the Executive Director of the Bisan Center for Research and Development in Palestine.

long term development strategy that could ensure consistency in achieving the basis for independence and self sustainability.

In addition, despite the efforts of the Palestinian civil society organizations to make available the needed services and social and economic infrastructure, there remains a continuous regress in various areas of development in Palestinian society, as a result of the Israeli attacks against the Palestinians.

A look upon Palestinian Civil Society

Given the numbers of the Center for Economic and Political Research in Palestine, there are 926 Palestinian civil society organizations as of May 2001, working in the West Bank and Gaza. These organizations had a major role in serving and enhancing the Palestinian development goals.

Since the start of the Intifada, the Palestinian development vision took 3 approaches:

- Continuing the resistance against the Israeli occupation
- Continuing the development of the state and the enhancement of a democratic society based on social justice, gender equality, respect of human rights, and equal opportunities for all....
- Answering to the local needs and priorities through creative social models, and defending the interests of weak and marginalized groups

In this regards, several strategies have been adopted to implement this vision:

- Raising awareness in society regarding main issues of development and poverty eradication
- Influencing regulations, legislation, and public policies as well as lobbying policy makers in general and the Palestinian Authority in particular.

- Institutionalization and capacity building
- Networking and coordination among all influential groups in the process of development and democratic change.

As for the relationship between Palestinian and Arab groups, it may be concluded that:

- Palestinians welcome cooperation with the other Arab groups for two main reasons; (1) the increasing difficulties that Palestinian civil society organizations are facing (2) the increased questioning and restrictions put by donor groups given the fear from organizations related to terrorist movements.
 - There is an emerging importance for networking and establishing networks in the Region
 - There is fear and questioning for some operating networks which were established as a result of support from donor groups and not as a result of mobilization by real partners.
 - There are problems arising from working with partners due to the lack of experience in civic activity or the difficulty of cooperation due to the big restrictions that they are facing from national governments.
 - There is a lack of clear mechanisms that regulate the relationship between civil society organizations and networks.

Accordingly, establishing a successful partnership and cooperation between Arab and Palestinian civil society organizations requires a common perspective for a just and permanent solution for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In addition, there is a need for setting clear issues of partnership in areas of human development (agreement that social, economic, and

political reform in the entire Arab region is a main factor for real sustainable development), democratic change, social justice, and issues of peace and security. Moreover, there is a need to integrate national initiatives with international ones, so as not to isolate the Arab region from its international surroundings.

As for the main challenges facing an Arab-Palestinian partnership for regional development, the following should be considered:

1. Weakness of information exchange and communication mechanisms
2. Lack of vision regarding the partnership
3. Inequality in capacities and human resources
4. Lack of mechanisms for active and effective cooperation
5. Funding issues

In this regards, possible strategies and mechanisms for future cooperation could include;

- Support of active Palestinian websites that could enhance the process of information and experience exchange, which could present a strong tool for lobbying and networking
- Working through academic and educational institutions to spread information on the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, local culture, and daily lives of the Palestinians
- Working through the Media, whereby to enhance the relationship between Palestinian CSOs and Arab media groups, in addition to considering the establishment of an independent radio and TV station for civil society
- Networking and working through a public forum for discussing the Palestinian issue and through sending study groups to Palestine for examining the challenges facing Palestinians
- Developing strategic plans in various sectors in Palestine and the Arab region to enhance the use of resources and the efficient response to priorities.

- Achieving partnership projects and research through independent funds from Arab resources thus enhancing and easing funding issues in the Region.

In addition, it was noted that there is a need to develop an emergency plan that takes into consideration various political scenarios and that sets accordingly the priorities and needs of the Palestinian society.

Amongst the mechanisms for cooperation there are:

1. Participation of Arab and Palestinian civil society organizations in common campaigns that would strengthen networking and institutionalization of their work.
2. Establishing lobbying campaigns in the Arab region that follows Palestinian rights and situation.

Through working together in support of the Palestinian issue, Arab civil society organizations could build capacities in the region for enhancing lobbying and influencing funding policies and strategies. The proposed partnership in support of Palestinian development could become a model of partnership and cooperation that could be used for regional cooperation internationally, and could enhance reforms processes in the entire Arab region.

Conclusion:

The Moroccan civil society has succeeded twice in organizing a national social forum that is open to all groups of civil society. The MSF has been a real attempt to develop the civil society dynamics, not only in Morocco but in the whole Arab region. Accordingly, it presents an opportunity to elaborate regional perspectives on the issues of globalization, development, the process of seeking and building alternatives, and enhancing the ability to transfer the involvement with the social forums into bridges between the local and the international achievements. This is of significant importance in light of the highly debatable issues of the Arab social movement and its future.

Based on the experiences of the two Moroccan Social Forums (2003/2004), it is worth noting that the Moroccan civil society, with the diversity of the involved and active groups, showed readiness to host the sixth World Social Forum in 2006. This will be a highly important event for the Arab region, given the evolving and changing role of civil society organizations in various Arab countries and the increasing challenges they are facing given national, regional, and international dynamics. The Arab region is currently the center of debates on issues of democratization, reform, and global integration. The role of civil society and social movements is faced with mounting questions in light of these issues. Accordingly, besides giving a new impulse to civil society in Morocco and in the Arab region as a whole, a World Social Forum in Morocco would give the process depth in color, and a Mediterranean, African, Amazigh, and Arabic dimension. Such an initiative would be of great importance and significance to the Arab CSOs, including ANND, which will support it and contribute to Arab civil society mobilization towards the success of WSF convening in Morocco.