

Arab NGO Network for Development

World Summit for Social Development

Geneva 2000

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Arab NGO Network for Development

Steps towards the World Summit for Social Development

Based in Beirut-Lebanon, the Arab NGO Network for Development, was founded in 1996, During the process of the regional preparation for the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in March 1995. It is a gathering of 65 Arab NGO from Arab 12 Countries.

The Coordination Committee of the Network was elected during the meeting of the Second General Assembly held in December 1999, with the participation of 53 members from Palestine, Egypt, Algeria, Tunis, Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan, Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon.

In December 1999, the Arab NGO Network for Development organized a second regional preparatory meeting for the World Summit for Social Development - Geneva 2000. The UN resident representative, the Head of the EU Delegation in Lebanon attended the meeting, in addition to 81 Arab and European NGO representatives. During two days, the attendees discussed a document about the development in the Arab world, and the challenges that NGO are facing in the region. National reports on poverty in various Arab countries were also presented and discussed. Many of these reports were published in the annual report of Social Watch.

In March 2000, the coordination Committee of the network met in Beirut to follow up the preparations for the Social Summit and issued a Declaration, which is a position paper of the Arab NGO Network for Development.

The Network representatives attended the PrepCom II held in New York, between the 3rd and the 14th of April 2000, the Development Caucus selected the network to address the UNGASS of the prepcom II by a statement on the position of the NGOs concerning the main issues discussed during the meetings, the statement was addressed by Izzat Abdul Hadi, member of the coordination committee of ANND.

In this Brochure, we are publishing selected documents issued for the World summit for Social Development. Those documents reflect the vision of the members of the Network, They are the result of a collective effort of NGO representatives from 12 Arab and 7 European countries in addition to the participatory effort of many resource persons.

The selected documents are the following:

"Development in the Arab Region" an updated paper prepared by the preparatory committee for the arab regional meeting held in Lebanon in 1994 in preparation for the first social summit held in Copenhagen 1995.

Final declaration of the regional preparatory meeting for the Social Summit", held in Lebanon in December 1999.

"Position paper of the Arab NGO Network for Development", Issued in the meeting held in Beirut in March 2000.

"The statement of the Development caucus" presented by Izzat Abdul Hadi on behalf of the Arab NGO Network for Development at the UNGASS of the PrepCom II in New York, April 2000.

Beirut May 2000
Executive Director
Ziad A. Samad

Development in the Arab World

And the Role of the Arab Non Governmental Organizations

I- Introduction

Humanity enters the 21st century having achieved tremendous and comprehensive progress in its productive technological and scientific capabilities. Nevertheless, such vast potential for productive capabilities have not been transformed into factors of improvement of the difficult conditions of the life of many humans in various sectors. According to the World Bank 1,500 million of the inhabitants of the universe get an income of less than one dollar a day, and thus suffer from severe poverty. Forty percent of the world population also suffers from lack of electricity and health services. According to the UNDP about 800 million suffer from malnutrition and million suffer from chronicle malnutrition. 17 million die every year of diseases that can be cured like diarrhea, malaria and tuberculosis. That description normally fits the coun-

tries in the south, which increases the gap between the rich north and the very poor south. Poverty at the international level negatively and particularly affects women and children. Therefore, increasing numbers of the labor force are living in circumstances characterized by terrible inhumane exploitation. The number of street children in many cities has increased, as well as crime rate, drugs and prostitution. All of this has led to the breaking up of the social fabric and the destruction of the family pressuring its abilities to provide social safety nets for its members, which made the social marginalization of large groups of the poor population something associated with the dominant growth pattern.

The increase in the level of social polarization internationally is closely associated with poverty and social marginalization. According to the UNDP, in the last thirty years the income of the lowest twenty- percent of the very poor income earners dropped from 2 to 1.45 percent of the world income. Where as the income of the highest twenty percent of the very wealthy income earners increased from 70 to 85 percent of the global wealth.

358 billionaires have a fortune that exceeds the cumulative income of 45 percent of the population of the world or 2.3 billion individuals. As for the unemployment figures, it shows an increase in the rate of unemployment and deterioration in the conditions and qualities of job opportunities. The International Labor Organization (ILO) reports indicate that in 1995 about 30 percent of the global labor force suffered from unemployment or underemployment. Such high unemployment rates have pushed large segments of the population towards what is known as the informal economy, which is composed of unstable low paid, low productive jobs in which the laborers do not have any health or social protective systems. In 1995 in Latin America figures show that about 55.7 percent of the labor force worked in the informal sector.

We can add to these social problems the problem of the deterioration of the environmental conditions as well as the political problems concerning the retreat in democratic participation, the deterioration of the human rights condi-

tions, and the intensification of military wars and ethnic conflicts leading to a moral, spiritual and cultural crises. The human progress and economic growth are continuously being destroyed and distorted which threatens humanity with self-destruction.

II- The Contemporary World and Its Problems: a Panoramic View

In the last decade the world has witnessed an important development in the tendency towards greater globalization. More than 135 states joined the World Trade Organization, and the various rounds of negotiations, especially the Uruguay round, leading to many international agreements in free trade and liberating global trade in relation to commodities, services and capital. All of these took place while of the role of science and technology; information and communication were increasing tremendously leading to economic globalization in production, distribution, consumption and an unprecedented financial globalization. At the same time, some sort of a globalization of ideas began to take place as the dominant international centers and institutions tried to impose and market them. However, it was faced with an increasing resistance and limited success. In this particular meaning, globalization is a new phenomenon. However, according to many economists globalization is a reflection of an essential characteristic in the capitalist system in order to expand and impose its laws and mechanisms globally, annexing markets and countries in a process of increasing merging in an uneven manner that would centralize wealth, on the one hand, and lead to social destruction and marginalization on the other. Globalization has not reached its final form yet. It is still experiencing many changes in form and substance, and the world is passing through a transitional stage in which many contradictions and confrontations between the large economic blocs are taking place, especially at the levels of large corporations and regional economies. In 1997, the financial crises that started in east and Southeast Asia moved to Russia and Brazil in 1998. These crises were a reflection of a

financial global crisis for as the average rate of capital movement increased, the average rate of global trade and productive investment remained intact. The reason for that was the availability of a surplus capital, which was able to move fast to other countries in order to obtain a higher and safer rate of profit. In 1992, capital moved to Southeast Asia because of the higher economic growth rate. That led to inflation in the stocks and real state markets as well as in the real value of the national currencies. Faced with first financial crisis, this capital retreated and withdrew from the region resulting in the collapse of the national currencies in many of these countries, especially Malaysia, Thailand and South Korea. What happened in this region is an indicator that the pattern of financial globalization has entered into the crisis stage as many countries began implementing systems of financial control and regulation to protect them. This does not mean, however, that economic, technological and trade globalizations are not continuing strongly.

On the other hand, the resistance of the developing countries, social movements, civil society organizations, labor unions, pro-environment movements, and human rights organizations exemplified another kind of resistance to globalization. The demonstrations in Seattle in December 1999, against the World Trade Organization's meeting, and the protest movements in many other countries, were a clear expression of the increasing awareness of the people and societies, of the dangers associated with free trade and globalization. Globalization is viewed as a cover up for the hegemony of the strong capitalist centers on the global economy in order to adjust it to maintain and promote their own interests at the expense of the developing countries and the vast majority of the real producers in developed countries. The horizon for changing, correcting or even decreasing the negative impact of globalization to protect the right to development and to protect the rights of the workers, small producers, and marginalized groups in the industrial world, depend on that sort of resistance that is being practiced by the people through their organizations, which express their interests and their choices.

III. Evolution of the Development Conceptions

The results of development in the contemporary world, with all its success and failures, indicate the inadequacy of the accelerating economic growth logic as a single factor for development, which means that there is a qualitative difference between growth and development. While the first is concerned with an increase in productivity, an accumulation of wealth and expansion of markets and productions, the second is concerned with the priority of human fact, respect of environment conditions and social justice. Lately, despite the economic growth no improvement has occurred to the conditions of the lowest 20 percent of the most impoverished classes. Furthermore, social problems were intensified and many social movements were established to try to manage and resolve such problems. The various UN summits from Rio De Janeiro's earth summit to Cairo's inhabitants summit and the women's summit Beijing and finally to the social summits in Copenhagen in 1995, all expressed the efforts to confront the contemporary problems summed up in the trio human rights-environment-poverty. The UNDP human development report show that in order for any country to improve its competitive capabilities and increase its production it is essential to achieve economic stability first. However, this will not automatically extend to include the poor. On the contrary, growth can happen under the continuation or intensification of the sufferings of many segments of the population and at the least under its stagnation. Empirical facts have shown economic growth is a necessary but insufficient condition to fight poverty and social inequality. Therefore, the annual UNDP reports recommended the necessary focus on the quality and structure of growth in order not to consider growth as the only measurement. Economic growth can be associated with unemployment, poverty, lack of participation, the weakening of local cultures, and the ruining of the future as a result of the environmental damages. All international summits, particularly the social summit in Copenhagen called for the adoption of developmental strategies that revolve around humans as an alternative to the dominant patterns of growth that place profit at the over social development.

1. The Concept of Development from the Point of View of the NGO Sector

Prior to the spread of the international organization's literature on development in the 1990's, development was the center of dominant discourse in politics, economics, and sociology in the Arab world since the 1950's. Despite the differences between the two conceptions, the old and the new, which should be seen and linked to the different historical stages, there are many similar elements that should be defined. Knowing these elements is essential to produce an Arabic conception of development that takes into consideration the particular path and alternative that can be pursued by the Arab countries in order to achieve justice, democracy and development. In the last decades, development in the Arab world expressed many goals and ambitions to obtain independence to form the national Arab state, and to achieve unity and integration. Development meant during that time as an example:

- To obtain economic independence after political independence.
- To achieve growth and economic progress through industrialization, transfer of technology and diversification of production.
- To achieve social progress by getting fighting illiteracy as well as the colonial legacy of tribal and sectarian divisions of society.
- To built a modern institutional state.
- To achieve agricultural reforms, and improve the conditions of the poor in society through the intervention of the state as the major socio-economic actor.
- To pursue Arab integration in order to reach Arab unity, which would allow the achievement of developmental objectives.
- To pursue a policy of non-alignment based on the demand for a new international economic order that is more just, and a new international political that is more democratic from the perspective of the developing countries.

In this context each Arab country not involved in a pattern of development that was relatively close to or far from such conception ranging from pure liberal option to an extreme statist option and mixed policies especially relevant to the linkage with the international market and economy, or with the predominant financial centers.

The developmental project was associated with the project to build a national state with independent political connotations and with social connotations revolving around social justice. It was based on the belief that the state is the main actor in the developmental process in which it should directly intervene in the various spheres to achieve development. That gave the Arab developmental project since the 1950's a statist character and disabled the formation of a civil society that has a margin of autonomy from the state, and it weakened the elements of democracy, citizen participation in the decision making process as well as decentralization in this pattern of development in the Arab world.

In the context of historical development, the Arab developmental project suffered from retreat and stagnation in the same manner as the Arab modernization project since the beginning of the century. In both cases, the project soon reached maturity and appeared to be convincing, attractive and comprehensive, covering political, economical and social aspects and was able to insight and push the masses to adopt it. However, the project soon began its descending track as a result of the external pressuring factors as well as the many internal factors that emptied it from its substance. This historical experience gradually reached its end creating its own crisis. Soon the developmental discourse disappeared to be replaced by a neo-liberal discourse based on an exclusive focus on economic growth. In this context, the return of the contemporary developmental discourse, especially in the UN literature, is a reaction to the neo-liberal discourse and to the increasing deterioration of the humanitarian and social living conditions of the majority of the population of the globe especially since the 1980's under the hegemony of the idea of structural adjustment

The Arab NGO sector is the most affected and responsive sector with the contemporary and developmental conception, especially as the latter focuses on the distinctive role played by the civil society as a full partner in the developmental process. The Arab developmental literature forms some sort of a necessary immunity that helps in the reproduction of the concept of development in a creative and indigenous way avoiding two extreme stands:

- The first is to reject the incoming concept as an alien and foreign one that does not fit our social and historical characteristics.
- The second is exemplified by the simple and uncritical acceptance of the concept as a reflection of imitation, which makes it imposed on the Arab reality and justifies the first rejectionist stand.

The Arab NGO sector stands on the contemporary development concept is a genuine stand. It looks at development as a firm option derived from the contemporary experience of the Arab societies and therefore, it falls on a very rich experience fully confident of its ability to distinguish its conception, critique it and reproduce it in accordance with Arab reality. In this context elements of modernization, liberalization, economic progress and social justice were always present in the two experiences of Arab modernization and developmental projects. These are essential components of the contemporary concept of development. However, the latter contains two additional components, the first is sustainability, which includes economical, social and environmental substance, and it is a product of the current stage of economic progress. The second is the duality of empowerment and participation that are based on the concept of triangle partnership between the three sectors, the governmental, private and non-governmental one. It is also a new concept that differs from the old developmental experiences, which gave the state a predominant role and did not allocate a real role for the NGO sector or the civil society organizations.

Based on all of this, we in the non-governmental sector define development

in the Arab world as follows:

Development is a project and an option for the comprehensive civilizational evolution of our societies. It contains all the cultural, political, social and economical levels at the same time. It also contains a restoring the essence of the Arab modernization project at the beginning of the 20th century, as well as the national independence project of the post independence period. However, such restoration is being carried along a contemporary formula that takes into consideration our countries experiences and the international experiences of national liberation, independence and development in the last five decades including the qualitative contemporary developments of globalization with all of its effects on all countries and people. The contemporary Arab developmental project is an alternative course for social development, which aims at the liberation of these countries from backwardness according to an efficient and scientific plan that benefits from the lessons of history and is based on democracy and participation as the basic mean of the work of the state and society.

Such an option may contain at the national level the following elements:

- An increase in growth and productivity in association with regional and social justice, especially on property and redistribution relations.
- A democratic transformation of state and society including decentralization and participation from below in the decision and policy-making processes.
- The abrogation of all forms of economic, social and legal discrimination against women, youth and any segment of the population suffering from such discrimination.
- The strengthening of the multi level mechanisms of social and national integrations.
- The strengthening of democratic and citizenry culture as well as the values of participation, self-reliance, tolerance and openness.
- The recognition of the role of the civil society and the NGOs as ar

essential partner in the decision and policy-making processes. Strengthening their role along side of the state as a civic arena, where social and national integration take place through participation in the public affairs.

IV. The Arab World: A Panoramic View

The Arab world as part of the third world does not differ from other south peripheral states in its history of the economic merging into the global market whether through direct colonialism, or through uneven and unequal economic relations that reflect the economic domination through the international division of economic labor, international trade relations, monopoly over technology and market domination. Nevertheless, there are particular characteristics that distinguish the Arab world from the rest of the south states. The most important of which are:

- 1- The existence of huge quantities of crude oil, which made it the first source of that vital commodity to the industrial world for a long period of time. About two thirds of the oil reserve in the world lies in the Arab world. This strategic commodity plays a significant role in the economic growth in the Arab world. On the other hand, it increases the dangers associated with the plans to regain control over the region in order to monitor the use of this strategic commodity. This has been the case in the last two decades in the Gulf States especially after the direct American military intervention after the Gulf war in order to firmly control oil production, oil pricing, transportation and marketing. As a result of the oil wealth there developed an accumulated monetary wealth in the Gulf States especially after the increase of the oil prices in 1973. However, most of it went to finance security systems and purchasing of weapons that sucked the surplus capital from the region and transferred it to the developed countries turning it into one that lacks capital and suffers from debt. The Arab world has also witnessed in the last decades some degrees of labor migration, which helped in the spread out of

the oil fortune outside of the rich oil producing countries, especially in the 1970's and 80's. This tendency, however, was reversed in the 1990's after the second gulf war negatively affecting many Arab economies such as Yemen, Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine.

- 2- The second characteristic is greatly linked to the first. The strategic location or position that the Arab world occupied during the cold war and its experience of a long historical conflict with the Zionist settlement project in Palestine supported by the dominant international centers has affected the Arab world as it forced many Arab countries to follow a pattern of militarization and to fight five very costly wars in which a lot of economic resources were allocated to military budgets and weaponry.

The economic and geo-political importance of the Arab world is behind the targeting of many projects, which aim at the restructuring of the region in accordance with international balance of forces. That is not only reflected with the direct American military presence in the Gulf, but also in the peace settlement projects starting with the Madrid conference in 1991. Economic projects such as the Middle East order sometimes, or the Mediterranean order some other time, are designed to replace the fragile Arab regional order with alternative ones. On the other hand, to integrate the economies and countries in the region in the new international order intensifying their dependency and increasing the domination of the imperialist powers over the national governments in the Arab world.

- 3- Lack of water resources in the Arab world has become a strategic and security issue as well as an important developmental issue. The population of the Arab world represents five percent of the world population, but they only get one percent of the available global water resources. More importantly, most of these water resources are not controlled by the Arab states, which may lead to wars and conflicts with other states in order to secure this vital commodity. On the other hand, the adaptation with lack of water is pushing

the states in the Arab world to abandon agriculture as the economic value of water in agriculture is much less than its value in industry or domestic use. The rate of population growth is still relatively high in the Arab world, estimated about 2.1 percent annually. That means that the population will double in about forty years. It may reach 600 million by the year 2035. This will increase food dependency as the Arab world imports now 15 percent of the food products and thus pay very expensive and costly bills.

- 4- The Arab world has experienced in the last fifty years, an increase in the role of the state in the economy. This was true whether the model of the state was a socialist, liberal or conservative oil-rentier model. In the last decades the role of the state decreased, as a result of the global tendencies and international trade, capital movements and communications. Inevitably this weakened the protection provided by the state to many segments of society, especially the poor, as a result of the policies of structural adjustments. That negatively affected the human development record especially social development in the Arab world. As for the oil-rentier states it suffered from a sharp drop in the oil prices, which resulted in accumulated budget deficits and therefore a decrease in its ability to redistribute the surplus rent to many groups in society.
- 5- The fifth characteristic, which has made some consider the Arab world exceptional, is the problem of lack of democracy. Arab states share the elements of the absence of the principle of alteration of power, lack of political participation, the hegemony of the state as an authoritarian machinery, disrespect of human and minority rights. In spite of some of the political liberalization that has taken limited and controlled character in some Arab countries since the late 1980's, the intensity of political and social polarization increased threatening these states with civil wars and social disintegration especially with the increase growth of extreme violent and intolerant tendencies. This limited political opening is not more than an attempt to manage the crisis by the existing regimes and it is revocable as the phe-

nomena of personification of authority, weak democratic and civic culture, and weak social and capable forces to support the democratic process. lack of democracy becomes an essential obstacle to the development in the Arab world strongly producing irrational policies and deficiencies in the allocation of resources. The problem becomes more severe when this reality is related to the hegemony of the state over social life and civil society organizations that are either forbidden, weak or dependent on the state. All of this takes place with the lack or absence of the rule of law.

- 6- The issue of severe centralization of the state and its institutions along with the backwardness of the administration, and the wide spread of corruption. In the Arab world this issue is associated with the continuous use of the state by the ruling elite as basic means in political mobilization and the reproduction of power. Such practices decrease the state as a reflection of the public good and increase the rentier functions politically and economically. This characteristic makes corruption in the administration, which is a global phenomenon, a very peculiar case in the Arab world because it is linked to the dominant political relations distinguishing Arab State and society. The absence of an efficient public administration capable of implementing public policies and managing development not only hinders development and leads to the loss of efforts notwithstanding the heavy cost of waste and corruption.
- 7- There is a special characteristic to the woman issue in the Arab world. In addition, to the general socio-economic factors that hinder the integration of women in society and their active participation in development, there are special social and cultural factors relevant to dominant traditional social structure in the Arab world, which enhances this extreme male chauvinism and increases the differences between men and women marginalizing the latter's role. A lot must be done to abrogate all forms of discrimination against women, legally and practically, especially as the principle of equality between men and women does not contradict the Arab values. This prin-

principle of equality is one of the important bases of development.

- 8- Labor migration in the Arab world. There are different problems here; on the one hand we have countries that export labor force, especially the skilled ones, which leads to the loss of an important human resource and essential component of development that can not be compensated by their remittances to their countries. On the other hand, there are the countries that import immigrant labor and with the absence of appropriate agreement among the Arab countries this has created many problems to the immigrant laborers themselves, who do not usually get any form of social protection, and thus work under harsh conditions and low paid jobs. In addition, this issue takes special dimension in the rich oil producing countries, especially in the Gulf, as there is a high rate of employment of foreign labor, especially of Asians in numbers that may lead to demographic imbalances. Moreover, labor problems are intensified in countries like Algeria, Morocco, Lebanon, and Jordan especially in relation to higher unemployment and underemployment rates.

- 9- The last characteristic has to do with the fact of the plurality of the Arab states and the existence of huge differences among them. If development under current conditions require large economic structures and wide markets, most Arab countries do not have the necessary conditions to engage in a successful developmental process if they are left alone, but collectively the Arab states possess many factors to allow the process of development to succeed.

Some states have tremendous oil wealth and financial capabilities, but they lack population and they are mostly deserts. Other states are large, heavily populated and have great agricultural capabilities (Egypt and Sudan), but they lack capital. Others yet, small and medium sized that might have elements like human resources, economic experience but lack other elements. In general, the Arab world can be divided into five groups:

- i. Those who have lots of oil, and little of other factors including population, thus depending primarily as rentier states on oil. This group includes Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Libya.
- ii. Oil producing countries with a population and other capabilities that allow them to build a diversified economy. This group includes Algeria, Iraq and to some extent Saudi Arabia.
- iii. Countries that depend heavily on human resources with the existence of limited economic and financial resources. This group includes Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Tunisia, and to some extent Syria.
- iv. Countries that are more industrialized and enjoy not only human resources but also the availability of agricultural resources long experiences with agricultural production, and relatively large markets. This group includes Egypt and Morocco.
- v. The last group includes the poor agriculturally based economies and entails Sudan, Mauritania, Somalia and Yemen. The last country, despite its oil production is grouped with the other countries because of its level of development is closer to them than to other Arab countries.

Although most Arab countries have achieved significant progress in a number of social indicators since 1970, this did not change the position of the Arab countries in general according to the human development reports, which placed them in clear low positions in relation to other developing countries in other regions with the exception of sub-Saharan African countries.

The conditions and factors of development are unevenly distributed in the Arab world, which makes the achievement of development conditioned by various missing forms of economic cooperation and integration. The intra-Arab economic relations are very low in contrast with Arab relations with other regions especially with the developed Western countries. Also, the political relations between the Arab countries are experiencing a lot of tensions, division and separations, which makes the potential for real integration unrealistic. Th

various reports show that intra-Arab trade relations do not exceed 4 to 5 percent of the total volume of Arab trade, while it reaches 80 percent with the Western world.

V. Formal Arab Development Models

In an attempt to create a typology of Arab development models one can distinguish between three distinctive types as follows:

1. The oil-rentier model

Oil-rentier countries are distinguished by the dependence of their economies on the revenues of extracted crude oil that are redistributed internally in the form of rents to the various political and social levels. This rentier form is also assisted by the monarchical character of the political systems of these countries, and by a dominant tribal structure in society. These countries are set apart by abundance of wealth, lack of population, heavy dependence on foreign labor, and full integration in the capitalist system with strong political and economic dependency.

It is very inaccurate to use the term development to describe the economic growth pattern that these countries followed. Their economies are not only unproductive and rentier but exclusively dependent on one basic commodity that is crude oil. Their social structures are still undeveloped despite the large fortunes, which make the average income in them relatively higher than in other developing countries. The pattern of consumption in these countries is characterized by the inflation of the volume of military spending, which makes them one of the most important weaponry markets in the world. It is also characterized by the consummatory spending and luxurious forms especially in real estate projects that have a lot of luxuries, but little productivity. As for industrial and agricultural projects regardless of their importance they can not be considered detrimental of the socio-economic pattern that is because it is subject to

various distortions as a result of the surplus in oil revenues, which makes its cost much higher than normal and international cost, but subsidized by the intervention and support of the state. In addition, to the above, in recent years, especially the Gulf War, the continuous drop in oil prices below the level of 1973, produced a new reality in these countries. The international economic order through its own mechanism was able to adjust to the higher prices of oil and gradually drain the region from its surplus through the channeling of petro-dollars to serve the economies of the center, therefore, making this fortune a mean to deepen dependency instead of a mean to liberate these economies and develop them. For political reasons as well as strategic positions the region became a primary market to buy weapons transforming these countries into indebted nations. In some, one can say that the countries following the oil rentier pattern did not experience real development in the meaning that we referred to at the beginning.

2. The Nationalist Statist Model

This model contains a group of countries that vary in their levels of development, but share in the adoption of the independent developmental approaches, national liberation, and socio-economic state intervention theories. This model is the only one among the three models that can be described as a developmental model, especially in reference to the policies in the period between 1950 to 1970 and in accordance with the general developmental model followed by many third world countries in the same period.

This model can be described in the following manner:

- 1) The direct role of the state in the commanding the economy including the productive processes as well as the vast role in providing public services like health, education, water and electricity needs.

- 2) An attempt to diversify economic activities and to create a balance be

tween the various economic sectors with an emphasis on the priority of industrialization, agricultural reforms, nationalization of foreign companies, and the direct supervision of the state on basic productive activities.

3) The implementation of inflexible and protective monetary and trade policies through several mechanisms like protective tariffs, state monopoly over external trade, a system of subsidies to the basic commodities with rationing cards sometimes, an official pricing of the national currency regardless of the market price and restraining the financial and trade exchanges as well as the role of the capital markets and banks.

About three decades of the life of that model produced certain results that allow the following observations:

a) These countries have carried the burden of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which was coupled with military spending that exceeded their capabilities, on the one hand. On the other hand it led to long-term militarization of the political and social life, which hindered both the democratic transformation and the development of the civil society in favor of clear and comprehensive state hegemony.

b) This model of development depended economically, militarily and politically on various kinds of support that the Soviet Union provided during the cold war era. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990's the material base of support for this model also collapsed, in addition to the destruction of the Soviet statist theoretical model, which was imitated to a great extent by these countries.

c) Regardless of the serious and sincere attempts to develop, the experiences and the results have shown structural deficiencies in these efforts. These deficiencies made these countries unable to escape the domination of the global capitalist market economy and at the same time they led to the deformation in the economies of these countries. The positive results were limited to certain

aspects and were short lived. They soon collapsed when they were confronted with technological developments, competition and increased hegemony of capitalism on the global, political and economical life.

d) These countries suffered from an inflatory role of the state transforming the state into a dominant static authority and system of governance that ruled these countries according to inflexible and authoritarian mechanisms. The crisis of democracy was among the major reasons for the failure of developmental efforts especially as the state turned into its rentier function inflating the number of military and civilian employees and linking employment to the authoritarian network.

e) In the last decades this model began experiencing a gradual degradation of its social reforms and increasingly moving towards the market economy and the minimal role of the state. This development was associated with the growth of unproductive parasitic activities and with the formation of a parallel informal economy growing in the context of abnormal local and international economic relations. These countries did not succeed in supporting the industrial process with a scientific research policy to promote a longer industrial life term. They also did not succeed in their social policies, protective economic policies, relations with the international markets, as well as in their inability to strengthen the development process by increasing the level of participation, democratization and enhancement of civil society. Now they are faced with very difficult conditions, increasingly subjugated to the terms of the international financial institutions and to the requirements of the structural adjustment policies thus neglecting their previous developmental policies.

3. The Liberal Model:

The liberal model contains a variety of Arab countries in the Arab east and North Africa that share common premises in their socio-economic policies. Here too there are no developmental policies, but a dependent capitalist pattern

seeking to implement the liberal economic principles and laws as an organizing prototype for its economic policies. This model can be described as follows:

a) A minimal role of the state in the economy, especially in the productive sector limiting the role of the state to the legal regulatory organization and to the provision of primary public services.

b) Absence of binding governmental plans, and even when government adopts a three, five or ten year plan this plan is not more than a general framework and the basic economic activity would still be considered the responsibility of the private sector.

c) The economies of these countries suffer from clear imbalances between the economic sectors as the productive sector is generally weakened while the service sector is strengthened. However, it is also characterized by the absence of protective measurements, very limited subsidies and the market pricing of national and foreign currencies.

d) They are also characterized as exterior economies, externally oriented in their finance, imports including food, machinery and other important commodities. This in most cases has led to deficits in the balance of trade and balance of payment because of the limitations of their internal revenues.

The minimal role of the state in many of these countries allowed the emergence of a number political movements and parties. Therefore, making room for the development of civil society relatively independent from the state. However, the structural limitations of this Arab liberal model distinguishes it from the European liberal model as it may in the former come under monarchical or sectarian political systems and may be associated with a tribal, sectarian or family based social structure. In addition, it comes without the economic rationality of the bourgeoisie as it was in Europe after the industrial revolution. That is why the economic activity is intertwined with the power relations network, with the sectarian and tribal relations, and with the dependency relations to the global capitalist centers. The same distortions make the political struc-

ture and democracy a very fragile one. Democratic practices are linked to internal struggles and the complex balance of forces internally rather than a consistent policy based on a firm option. As for the role that the state played in economic legislation, and in the social sphere, especially in providing the essential public services, it has been affected by the concept of the welfare state, Keynesian economics, and socialist alternatives. With the dominance of neo-liberalist thought, these countries were quickly responding without any difficulties to the requirements of the transformation of their roles towards the removal of all restrictions on freedom of trade, opening their markets, and diminishing their socialist policies to the point of total negligence.

In spite of the differences in the economic consequences of the three models they share common characteristics. All of them are dependent and integrated into the global capitalist economy. They all suffer from some degrees of external debts, imbalance sectoral developments, and they generally positively respond to the requirements of structural adjustments.

VI. The Arab World and the Structural Adjustment Policies

International economic conditions have changed in the 1980's. The Arab countries were pushed like the majority of the developing countries to partake the structural adjustment policies in order to get out of its socio-economic crisis, which was caused by three factors. The increase in interest rate, the protective measurements taken by industrial countries, and the drop in the real material prices, especially crude oil led to tremendous drop in the value of external revenues that entered the Arab countries. The decrease in the capital transfer from oil producing Arab countries to other Arab countries led the latter to resort to financial institutions and borrow loans to compensate for the decrease in capital transfer and the decrease in their own exports. This led to an increase in the total value of external debt to about 201 billion dollars at the end of 1998, or in other words to about 49.2 percent of the GDP of the Arab coun

tries. This is a relatively high rate compared with the amount of debt of all developing countries reaching only 26 percent of the GDP of all developing countries. Expenditures remained relatively high while servicing the debt increased and revenues continued to decrease especially after the sharp drop in the price of crude oil during the second half of the 1980's. Consequently deficits in the balance of trade and in the balance of payment increased. On the other hand, inflation increased and foreign currency reserve began to dry up. Local capital began leaving and moving outside the Arab countries. These developments pushed the Arab countries to decrease their expenditures. The expenditures for investments and the expenditures that had a social character were the most affected by such measurement. Rates of economic growth dropped, unemployment rates increased, wages decreased, social services deteriorated quantitatively and qualitatively, and large segments of the middle class were increasingly impoverished. That sort of deterioration continued in the late 1980's and early 1990's as a result of the second gulf war, and in the 1990's with the drop of the oil prices.

Structural Adjustment Policies

Structural adjustment programs as pursued by the IMF and the World Bank are not based on managing the economic crisis of the developing countries in a manner, which would help in their process of development. Rather it follows a course that aims at resolving the problems of the lending of the financial centers and economies and protecting the dominant economic center. Such programs were launched with the explosion of the debt crisis and were highly associated with the problem of debt from the perspective and interest of the lending nations in particular.

The problem can be summed up in the inability of the indebted nation to pay back the loans and to service them. Therefore, the necessary economic and financial adjustments aimed at decreasing the imbalances in the financial and budget deficits of the indebted nations through the decrease of the useless" ex-

penditures. This provides financial surpluses that can be used to pay the annual interest servicing these loans to the lending nations. That is the essence of the economic stabilization plans imposed by international agencies, and it is in general short term and direct measurements that can at the same time allow for the longer term adjustments through the adoption of the wider program of structural adjustments.

The group of suggestions and recommendations in the structural adjustments programs, contain similar measurements such as:

1) Minimizing the role of the state in the economy and decreasing governmental expenditures on services, developmental and social projects.

2) Privatization of governmental enterprises and raising the prices of public services.

3) Liberating financial transactions and currency exchange, leaving it to the market.

4) Lifting of all governmental subsidies in production or consumption and abrogating all protective measurements to national sectors of agriculture and industry.

5) Providing legislative and tax incentives for foreign and local capital to encourage investments, while increasing direct and indirect taxation on all citizens to obtain necessary financial resources.

6) Increasing the dependent integration into the global economy in various means including the continuation of the policy of borrowing from international monetary agencies and according to its terms.

7) Directing the economy towards exports to satisfy the needs of the international market and to further depend on imports to satisfy local needs.

From that overview, it is clear that this option seeks to transcend the difficulties and obstacles facing capitalist expenditures, and to open up the southern markets including the Arab markets for its commodities. That is why we cannot find any mentioning of the essential problems that the Arab countries are

suffering from or any solution to these problems from their point of view. What is labeled as plans and developmental projects are not more than partial sectoral executive plans undertaken by the international institutions to provide the necessary infrastructure for profitable investments.

Most Arab countries have agreed to implement the programs of economic stabilization and structural adjustments as required by the IMF and World Bank. Morocco started since 1983, Tunisia since 1986, Jordan since 1989, Egypt since 1991 and Yemen and Algeria since 1995. The rest of the Arab countries like Lebanon, Syria and Sudan work in their own ways without any formal commitment in the implementation of measurements that fit the structural adjustment framework. However, structural adjustment policies in the Arab world generally characterized by being slow, gradual and cautious in order to avoid social upheavals and intensive crisis that may result from the implementation of the structural adjustment program especially so at the social sphere. Based on the above, and in accordance with the peace settlement projects one can say that the Arab world was and still is confronted with two contradictory options to build the future of the region. The first option is the option of dependent economic growth, which is integrated with the current contemporary economic conditions and based on the ability to respond to requirements of structural adjustments. In the context of this option, the Arab world is divided into three regions: the Middle East, the Gulf and the Maghreb or North Africa. These regions are linked with other regions outside the Arab world. Like the European common market for North Africa, Israel and Turkey in the new Middle East order, and the United States of America directly with regard to the Gulf states. This means the prevention of a unified geographical system and a common cultural and political identity, which are necessary to provide the essential components of a comprehensive development like a consistent cultural character, human financial and economic resources.

The alternative option stems from a different diagnosis of the problems and

of development, and is based on the rise of people and societies to a higher standard of living, a higher economic and political performance, more efficient and more responsive to the requirements of social justice, democracy and continual progressive within the unified Arab order.

VII. Basic Problems Facing Developments

The basic problems of development of the Arab world can be divided into five main categories as follows:

First, restoration of economic growth:

Statistical data show that the Arab world in the last decade has been experiencing a state of economic stagnation where the rate of productive labor and real wages are equal to 1970 figures. The GDP of the Arab world reached 408 billion dollars in 1997. The annual rate of economic growth during the period of 1975 - 1995 was 3.2 percent while it was estimated at 2 percent in 1999. The GDP per capita income was 2,327 dollars in 1975 and rose up to 2,914 in 1980, but was later dropped to 1,842 dollars in 1990. The quality and pattern of economic growth are the two primary decisive factors in the process of social and economic development. Economic experts consider that it is very essential to obtain higher rates of economic growth, different in different countries; in the coming years to avoid deterioration in the labor market and in the conditions of the economic active population. This requires an increase in the rates of investments, a decrease of the external debt, and guarantees that allow the continual pouring of capital. The ability of the Arab countries under the current circumstances seems to be limited in attracting its own migrated private capital, which is estimated between 500-750 billion dollars. To attract such capital there must be some relative political stability and essential economic reforms that do not yet exist. As for Arab exports they are growing slowly at the very low rate, which is 1.5 percent in the recent years in contrast to the rate of

10 percent for all developing countries and 6 percent for the growth of global rate. In addition, Arab economies and markets were not able to attract except very small percentage of international capital that was invested in the developing countries.

Second, demographic and labor problems:

The rate of increase of population declined in the last two decades from 3.2 percent in 1985 to 2.7 in 1992, and reached 2.5 in 1996. However, population will increase for it is estimated now about 280 million and may reach 600 million in 2035. more importantly the percentage of those who are below 15 years old will double during that time. It is already a high percentage estimated at more than 50 percent of the population. It is important to note that the rate of growth of the labor force rose from 3.2 percent in the 1980's to 3.3 percent during the first half of the 1990's and 3.7 percent during the second half of the 1990's, which would increase rates of unemployment and poverty. In general the estimates for the rate of unemployment in many Arab countries is no less than 15 percent.

The population structure in the Arab world is distinguished by increasing growth of population in the cities as a result of the rural migration and it is usually associated with the ruralization of the city especially because of the severe problems in housing, transportation and food. Slightly more than half of the population (52%) live in the cities or urban centers. It is estimated that in the year 2035 the urban population would be more than 350 million. As for the Arab labor force structure it is distinguished by several negative characteristics the most important of which is the low productivity of labor and the modest contribution of women in economic activities that was estimated in 1997 at about 19 percent only. It is expected to rise in the year 2000 to about 26 percent but that would still be considered as a low percentage. In addition, there is an increase of the unskilled labor, which is estimated at more than 50 percent of the labor force. Furthermore, the wide spread of underemployment,

the immigration of skilled labor, and the poring of a large percentage of children into the labor market (less than 15 years) are also important negative characteristics of the Arab labor force. On the other hand, about 40 percent of the total labor force work in agriculture, 38 percent in services and 22 percent in industry.

Third, problems of the environment, agriculture, food and water:

As we have mentioned before, lack of water is not only a developmental problem but is a strategic security one. The Arab world is considered the most dependent on food imports. As for drinking water only 70 percent of the population in the Arab world are getting now safe drinking water. The imbalance and food provision is estimated to be about 61 percent in the year 2000. The value of the food gap in 1995 was estimated at 12.7 billion dollars, with an increase of 18.7 percent in contrast with 1994.

In general agriculture production reached about 74.6 billion dollars in 1996 or 13.1 percent of GDP. It has increased from 8.9 percent of GDP in 1985. Nevertheless, the Arab world still suffers from a variety of obstacles and problems that are facing the food security process. The most important of which are lack of water, changes in climate, erosion of soil, weak material and monetary capabilities, low investments in the infrastructure and lack of development of the human skills.

There are also many environmental problems like direct desertification i.e. the desert movement (African and Arab deserts) or desertification that is a result of the deterioration of the forestry and the cutting of trees. This problem is more intensified when it is linked with population growth, increase in food needs and the climate changes that are expected to lead to greater drought. The negligence of the environment has an annual cost, according to many experts of 14 billion dollars, or of 3 percent of GDP. It is already a big problem in Yemen and North Africa. Air pollution is also affecting more than 60 million

of the inhabitants of the cities or about 40 percent of the total urban populations or 20 percent of the total population. According to experts to remedy the situation protecting the environment, fighting pollution and desertification will cost between 58 to 78 billion dollars in the next decade and it is considered a necessary and essential effort for development.

Fourth, the problems of social and economic performance:

In most Arab countries, the average rate of growth in the 1990's was lower than the average rate of population growth, with the exception of Libya and the Gulf states. The share of industry in the production structure as part of the total GDP decreased in 1996, for in 1985 it was estimate at 35.3 percent and dropped to 31.2 percent in 1996. The share of light industry, however, rose slightly from 9.2 in 1985 to 10.5 in 1996.

These figures, however, are not sufficient to describe the reality of the industrial sector. Extractive industry represents 20.7 percent. It is heavily dependent on the production and marketing of crude oil and natural gas. These two basic commodities in this industry are externally oriented and thus are affected by the fluctuations in the international market whether in terms of their prices or in terms of the quantities produced. The light industry is composed of food industry (23% in 1996), clothes and textiles (15%), oil refineries, natural gas, petrochemicals, chemical fertilizers, steel and iron, minerals and cement. The industrial sector is faced with many obstacles that start with the absence of an institutional structure appropriate to industry itself, the weakness of the supporting services for the industries, the national market limitations, and the various obstacles forbidding the free movement of commodities and individuals between the Arab countries. However, other types of obstacles have to do with the higher cost of industrial products and its lower quality. This leads to the inability of export-led industries to compete with similar products outside and imported products inside especially with the implementation of open trade policies. Labor-intensive industrial products such as food, clothes and textiles

need to be supported by modern technology to increase its comparative advantage and its competitive edge. Arab industries must provide technical know how and necessary training to implement international standards and criteria.

Social development in the Arab world is still below the required level because of the absence of necessary plans and strategies to formulate the necessary solutions to the many social challenges. These are increasing the rate of unemployment, the low participation of women in economic activities, the concentration of the educational system on quantities rather than qualities, the low enrollment in vocational education, and the low scientific and technological research output of universities and Arab research institutes. In addition, the housing problem is intensifying while living conditions are deteriorating and a widespread poverty is increasing for a large segment of the population. Illiteracy is still estimated at 41.4 percent, and although it is decreasing as a percentage the number of illiterates is increasing. Illiteracy varies from one country to the other as it reaches 60 percent in some of the least developed Arab countries and it drops to less than 20 percent in some other countries such as Lebanon and the Gulf states. Female illiteracy, however, is higher for it reaches about 75 percent in Mauritania and Yemen, and it was estimated in 1997 to reach 53.6 percent for all Arab countries.

As for the indicator, Gini coefficient as in the UNDP reports it is twice as much in the Arab world as it is in the other developing countries. Furthermore, while in the 1960's the differences in the per capita income between the oil producing countries and the non-producing countries was 2 to 1, it reached 9 to 1 in 1987, and it has increased in 1999 to 33 to 1, as the average per capita income in Sudan is 480 dollars while it is 15,770 dollars in the United Arab Emirates.

Fifth, cultural and political problems:

It is very difficult to envision a process of real development without and appropriate political performance, and without a supporting cultural project

While there are many problems that can be talked about only two obstacles are emphasized here.

1. The crisis of democracy in the Arab world in a comprehensive manner. There is a need to implement democratic transformations and to democratize the political life in direct and broad manner. On the other hand, there is a need to democratize social life and to allow for an effective popular participation especially in determining developmental needs. The existing reality, not only does it not help in the implementation of development it also represents a legitimacy crises for many Arab regimes. This endangers the regime's stability, weakens the states as institutions, laws and a social contract, and at the same time strengthens the authoritarian character of the state which does not recognize the rights of the free citizens and thus leads to the absence of citizenry and rule of law.
2. The cultural identity crisis with its particularity in the Arab world for the disturbed cultural and civilizational relations with the West, take many times religious forms. However, the essence of this crisis stems from the differences between the systems of values, and is a reflection of the Arab rejections and confrontations with the Western cultural penetration that is also associated with political and economic domination.

VIII. The Features of an Alternative for Development

Clearly, it is not an attempt to provide recipes for alternative developmental plans to the existing conditions and to the structural adjustment programs, but it is an attempt to benefit from the previous analysis in order to define the obvious sketches for such an alternative option and these sketches should be treated as collective levels interlinked with each other.

The general characteristics of an alternative developmental plan should include the following:

1. The developmental option must be an Arab integrative option that can unify and efficiently use the available human, natural and financial resources in an incorporated manner as opposed to the current divisions or to the regional plans that can not respond to the developmental needs.
2. The democratization of political life at the level of the state and society is a fundamental base for development. This is true at the level of the system, the opposing forces, or the social structure. That is not only necessary to increase the level of popular participation but it is also vital to enhance the political legitimacy of the regime. The higher the level of participation of citizens in the decision making policies directly through referendums or indirectly through elections, and the freedom to join political parties, trade unions and associations, the higher the legitimacy of the political system and the more stable it is.

The concept of participation takes more important dimensions in the sphere of social development as decentralization and municipalities in particular play a significant role in providing more efficient services and effective participation in development. In this way the role of the cooperative popular banks, educational institutions, and health service providers, depends on forms of cooperation with municipalities, NGO's, private sector, governmental agencies, trade unions, universities, and other civil society organizations.

3. Governments should play their role in development and implement social and economic policies to manage the many existing problems such as poverty, marginalization of groups, food security and unemployment as opposed to the current neo-liberal policies. This requires a redefinition of the role of the state, which enables the state to play the role of an efficient, rational and economic manager that gives the social dimension of development a priority and participates in providing the basic social services. The essence of the new conception of the state is based on the abrogation of the alleged contradiction between the state and the market, and it is also based on the participation of civil society. This open state is based on the experiences of many east-Asian states that achieved better records of develop

ment in the last decades. The open state is a state that carries public policies in education, health, food, labor, vocational training, culture, housing, and the environment with the aim of correcting inequality and enhancing the integration between the social and economic spheres as well as enhancing civil society.

A larger number of developmental experiences in the last decades were classified under two extremes: the statist model versus the neo-liberal market oriented model. The new integrative approach takes into consideration and assumes that there are different complementary roles for the state, the civil society and the private sector in development. The successful developmental experiences of many Asian countries have shown that the active role of the state in planning, providing the integrative framework to all parties and in playing an effective role in providing social services, equal opportunity and equality was an indispensable factor behind the success of these experiences.

4. The replacement of the partial economic options with collaborative policies integrating industrial development with a qualitative improvement in the conditions of the agriculture. At the same time to decrease the level of dependency in essential needs and to increase self-reliance to satisfy local needs in addition to the necessary reforms of educational system and development of research.
5. To decrease the domination of governments over civil society organizations and to empower the latter to enable them to effectively participate in developmental plans.

IX. The Role of Civil Society and NGO's

There are several definitions of civil society that may differ but at the same time agree on common criteria, which allows for the functional use of the term. The concept includes all forms of social organizations outside the political circle in the direct sense especially the state as an authority and official in-

stitutions. The expansion of civil society and its relative autonomy indicates the growth of the societies abilities or its different groups to manage many issues independently from the state and its institutions. The concept is a modern one and should not be applied to the structure of state and society before the formation of the modern state. However, in the Arab world the concept has a particular meaning for the state is predominant over many spheres (with the exception of the spheres that the neo-liberal policies that require the state not to intervene) and with the persistence of the traditional social structure and relations.

Based on the above, the civil society in the Arab world is often used to express the traditional, religious, sectarian, tribal and family structures that are still dominant in society. This use of the term in this manner is distorting it. Civil society as a concept should be distinguished from both the state and the inherited traditional structures. It refers to the modern voluntary associations that belong to the area of the modern state and are based on citizenry and free associations according to the free individual joining groups to promote collective interest. In this manner, these groups are engaged in a process of transformation of the existing traditional relations replacing them with modern civic relations and expanding social relations and the social fabric.

Civil society includes NGO's, NGI's, trade unions, vocational, cultural and cooperative associations, private media, popular organizations as well as the non-ruling political parties. They provide some sort of popular monitoring over the work of the government and state agencies as well as the private sector. For instance, civil societies organizations monitor and protect the environment, fight against discrimination, and they participate in the developmental process through redistributing resources in a more equitable fashion. The marginalized groups and the poor are the most beneficiaries of the work of civil society organizations, and many social groups also benefit from the available educational and training opportunities. In addition to that civil society organizations play an essential role in social integration, enhancement of national identity and

loyalty, and increase the level of participation of citizens in the public sphere. Furthermore, they play an important role in the making of social and economic policies at the local, sectoral and national levels.

Democracy and participation can not be reduced to voting whether in real elections or cosmetic one. It means the ability to provide continuous involvement for wide social segments in the decision making processes and in the supervision and execution of developmental projects practically. That requires a higher degree of decentralization something that does not exist in the Arab world as most regimes are very centralized and as there is a lack of real representative committees in the various local and regional territories that can play an effective role in both political life and development.

The ultimate objective of development is to increase the standard of living of the people, to decrease the gap in wealth and income and to improve the quality of life in the country. The developmental alternative is the system that contains the element of a democratically elected political leadership capable of organizing economic activities and developing the national resources in an efficient and socially balanced and cooperative manner. Indicators of success depend on the ability to achieve positive results in increasing economic growth, accelerating social development, increasing the standards of living, and stabilizing the legal and political system. This is carried out through the increase in per capita income and in employment, and the improvement and expansion in the basic educational and health services and social security system. Modern studies on developmental experiences assert that the relation between economic growth and imbalanced patterns of income and wealth distribution is a negative one. That means that the economic growth declines when the gap in income distribution increases. This would in return, lead to social and political instability that would create a situation of no confidence in the economic sphere which would eventually lead to a drop in investment and a decrease in economic growth. Therefore, we can not consider economic growth a sufficient for social development especially in developing countries and in particu-

lar in the Arab world. It is irrational to limit the economic role of the state to the macro-economic and financial balances. The state should pay sufficient attention to the establishment of the essential social and economic infrastructure especially in health and education. It should also be concerned with the redistribution of income, the social safety nets in addition to infrastructural projects such as electricity, irrigation, roads, as well as preserving environmental, natural and water resources. The primary developmental problems such as poverty and unemployment can not be left to the assumption that the mere economic growth will automatically expand economic activities and private sector's

investment, which in itself provide solutions. The negligence of social issues has very long-term negative effects. The disregard of nutrition, health, education, family disintegration and the feelings of insecurity will distort the basis of growth, expel investment and hinder technological progress. The effective management of unemployment requires, for instance, an increase in the rate of economic growth, but that increase can not be realized unless we allow for the participation of large segments of the marginalized population under poverty line. Achieving better results in development is a product of a large participatory work by the state, the market and the civil society at large. A real integration between the social and economic dimensions of development requires an increase in distributive justice and the collaboration of the main society forces involved in this effort. For all of the above reasons the state must be transformed into a coordinator of a wide alliance among all of these forces. In order for the state to carry out such a role efficiently, there must be an implementation of comprehensive reforms of its social and administrative institutions and structures. In addition, of its role in coordinating between all participating institutions in the processes of development and in the general policy making at various levels such as the local administration and municipalities, trade unions, the professional associations, economic and social groups, as well as the think tank organizations and the media. That is conditioned, however, by the existence of the political will to do that role, by the availability of information, statistics and transparency, as well as the legal

framework, the social dynamism and democratic culture.

This is how we can understand the commitments of the social summits in Copenhagen in 1995. This summit focused on eradication of poverty, full employment and the enhancement of social integration. It was an attempt to transform the concept of development into a practical course to be followed by governments that implement developmental strategies revolving around human needs. For that to take place structural and institutional changes must be introduced to the dominant systems, in addition to changes in the conceptions, values and treatment of the developmental courses. This would entail a change in the understanding of the relationships between NGO's, social movements and civil society organizations with respect to the state and to development. It also redefines the role of individuals and local groups as the basis of local development in association with the centralized development led by the open state that was discussed previously.

X. The Needs of Building an Efficient, Effective and Strong Arab NGO Sector

First: the development of an appropriate democratic and legal framework for Arab NGO's. This framework must include three interrelated elements:

The first element is to legitimize and to help sustain the existence and work of Arab NGO's. This principle is based on human rights conventions, international laws, and the Fourth Geneva convention. This element allows for the freedom of assand the freedom of citizens to join them at all levels.

The second element is the issue of the independence of Arab NGO's. This independence is defined in two levels: on the one hand, the right of the NGO sector to define its goals and its mission according to the priorities, needs and interests of the local societies, and in agreement with an appropriate, consistent and agreed upon national policy. On the other hand, the organizational and

administrative independence of NGO's must be respected i.e. not to allow the intervention of governmental agencies, or any other institutions in its decision-making processes. All of its committees must be elected according to the free will of its members. All decisions should be taken in the absence of external pressures that might push it to take decisions against the will, interests and needs of its members. These NGO's are serving the public good and must be treated as such.

The third element has to do with accountability, transparency, and monitoring of the work of NGO's. This element should be strengthened and enhanced in the internal life of the NGO's. All of these three elements are considered equally important for an appropriate legal framework for NGO's.

Second: the importance of the development of a general conceptual framework, with regard to development that can produce public policies in the various sectors such as health education and social welfare. This national public policy must be agreed upon between all effective forces in society, especially between the public sector, the private sector and NGO's. The formulation of such policies should take place in a democratic manner and through a wide societal participation. Needless to say, that these public policies must be in accordance with the developmental needs and priorities of the local Arab societies.

Third: the importance of formulating a model for professional cooperation between the national governments and the NGO sector. This model should be based on the concept of 'full partnership' between national governments and Arab NGO's. National governments should treat Arab NGO's as a full developmental partner that has the right to participate in defining the needs formulating policies, implementing them, and participate in the monitoring and evaluation of sectoral and national programs. In addition to that, the institutionalization of consultative mechanism between governments and NGO's in a systematic way can enhance participation and reduce competition and repetition. Moreover, government should recognize that the role of NGO's

is not limited to providing services but it extends to the development of democratic principles and practices in local communities. The attempt of many Arab governments to make a distinction between what they called the professional service providing role of NGO's and the political democratic role accepting the first as an important and necessary role while considering the second as destructive and alien to their tradition. In our view, the NGO sector has a comprehensive role to play in all spheres and sectors of society.

Fourth: the importance and necessity of developing a model of professional national and societal cooperation between NGO's and the rest of the civil society organizations. Civil society contains other organizations such as political parties, trade unions, the media, and social movements among others. The suggestion to implement a regular systematic mechanism of consultation between NGO's and the rest of civil society organizations is very important in discussing the many important issues in monitoring the state and its agencies emphasizing accountability and enhancing the participation of local communities in the decision-making processes. In this sphere, the relationships between NGO's and political parties should be redefined for these relationships were characterized by tensions in the past because of the desire of political parties to dominate these organizations and the desire of the NGO's to enhance their independence. It is very important to organize the relationship between NGO's and political parties in a manner that strengthens and empowers the Arab civil societies through an institutionalized, organized and continuous consultative mechanism.

Fifth: strengthening, empowering and enhancing the democratic structure of the Arab NGO's. This is an important need for a real institutional development that should include the issues of leadership, sound management as well as strategies, values and visions of NGO's. The building and development of an effective civil society may not be achieved without the enhancement of the Arab NGO's democratic structure. The work must focus on three interrelated spheres. The first is sound management with a clear vision and agreed upon

values, in addition to professional procedures and systems as well as clear transparent mechanism. The second has to do with the improvement and development of the administrative and technical capabilities of the institutions in the NGO sector. Subjects like financial administration, public administration, human resources management and projects' management are considered exceptionally important. In all cases efficient administrative techniques must be developed to improve the quality of services provided by NGO's and to develop their relations with local Arab communities. The third is relevant to the human resource development and the development of work ethics. This should include important issues like knowledge, information skills and ethics. The idea is to develop the capabilities in accordance with the new NGO requirements. That is to move from the mere providing of social welfare to development. However, attention should be given to the exaggeration in professionalism at the expense of neglecting voluntary work, which might negatively affect the NGO's on the long run. In stead, voluntary work must be reorganized to fit the NGO's new substance.

Sixth: coordination, cooperation, consultation and networking among the Arab NGO organizations. The network experiences, national and regional, differ in their patterns. It is important to exchange information on that matter in order to build an Arab network that can defend the Arab NGO interest and can build equitable and balanced relations with both the private and public sectors. The building of such networks should be based on a clear vision of the nature, substance and future of the Arab societies' social and economic development. The developmental policies should be developed according to this comprehensive vision. The basic objective of establishing networks in addition to the above mentioned reasons is to develop a strong local partner to national governments that can participate in the management of the developmental processes in Arab countries and reflect at the same time the local communities perspectives in public policies. The development of the concept of full partnership among the three sectors is one of the objectives of NGO networks.

Seventh: issues of self-reliance and self-financing. Financing and relations

with donors is very important for the sustainability and stability of NGO's. The exclusive dependence on external finance, threatens the continuation and existence of NGO's. Self-reliance requires the enhancement of NGO relations with local communities, in order to increase local participation in developmental activities and programs. In that regard, relations between NGO's and the private sector is very important and should be developed to create clear mechanisms to increase the role of the private sector in the processes of development. However, relations with international NGO's must also continue to enhance mutual respect, common visions and real partnership, especially in issues of strengthening democracy, social justice and human rights.

Eight: relations with Arab local communities. This is an important relation, especially in the light of the specialization of some Arab NGO's in playing the role of elitist professional developmental agencies with little or no organized and institutionalized relations with the people in the nand local communities. The existence of an effective and strong massive support for NGO's is a real insurance or guarantee for its sustainability. This is necessary so that NGO's can play an effective role on public policies of government as well as in balancing its relations with donors and strengthening its position in that relationship. The suggestion for a new integrative, institutionalized and systematic strategy of the relations between local communities and NGO's is an essential, important and decisive manner for the sustainability of Arab NGO's.

Conclusion

This paper does not claim to be comprehensive in knowing all the needs of building an Arab NGO sector. Certainly there are other important issues that stem from the particularity of the work of NGO's in each Arab country and the differences in the cultural, social, economic and political conditions in these countries as well as their different levels of development. The experience of NGO's in the many Arab countries also differed, creating and reflecting different needs and problems of the Arab NGO's. In all cases the NGO sector be-

came a universal phenomenon were the cultural, social, economic and political life can not be managed without its participation. The state can not also develop without the effective participation of the third sector.

NGO's are one of the basic channels for popular participation. In order to carry out such a role they have to establish a network of relations horizontally, nationally and internationally, so they can confront the attempts to control them or to avoid retreating to the tribal, religious or sectarian protectionism to face the pressure of the state on them.



Position of the Arab NGO Network for Development on The Implementation of the Commitments of the WSSD

The Arab NGO Network for Development believes that the majority of the commitments of the WSSD have not been implemented in Arab countries. The main reason being the lack of political will, both on the international and on the local level, to adhere to the action plan of the Summit. The declaration, the 10 commitments, and the action plan of the WSSD contain practical provisions and recommendations covering the issues of the Summit. Implementing them necessitates the global and national review of the prevalent political and economic structures. Concurrently, those in decision-making positions are the ones benefiting from the status quo. They have no interest in changing these structures unless they are faced by a strong mass movement consisting of the poor, the marginalized, and human rights and development activists everywhere, or by socioeconomic crises that cannot be solved by traditional means, such as what happened in Asia at the end of the 1990's.

On the other hand, the summit and the follow-up meetings did not produce suitable and effective mechanisms to follow-up, implement, and evaluate the commitments, which encouraged the increase in the flaws of the Summit and aided in the ignoring of its recommendations. Since the issue of pressuring the decision-makers to have the political will to implement the WSSD Commitments is a long-term and continuing struggle of the people and political and popular leaders, we as Arab NGOs recommend the following mechanisms overcoming the above obstacles and activate the pressure on the decision-makers:

- a) the creation of a sustainable mechanism for consultation, cooperation, and coordination with the UN on the international, regional and local levels;
- b) the creation of a sustainable mechanism for consultation, cooperation,

and coordination between Arab NGOs, on one hand, and specializes international agencies and donors , on the other;

c) the creation of a sustainable mechanism for consultation, cooperation, and coordination between Arab governments, on one hand, and Arab NGOs and other civil society organizations, on the other;

d) The creation of a sustainable mechanism for consultation, cooperation, and coordination on all international, regional, and national levels to monitor and follow the implementation of international declarations and commitments, whether they are decisions, legislation, or charters, with the participation of NGOs.

As for the main obstacles to development in the Arab world, we, as Arab NGOs, believe the following:

First. Regional Conflicts

Arab NGOs believe that regional conflicts and their impact are the main obstacles to development in the area. The main responsibility for the conflicts falls on the international community, so does the necessity to find just and sustainable solutions:

- The Israeli occupation of land in 3 Arab countries, Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon, and the continuing aggressions on Lebanon is one of the main obstacles to development in the region. In spite of the process started in Madrid in 1993, all of what leaks out of the negotiations concerning the settlement of the conflict contain infringements of the rights of self-determination of Arab peoples and countries freely and independently. They also infringe on their control of natural resources, especially water. This is addition to the ignoring of the inclusion of a just and fundamental resolution of the issue of Palestinian refugees based on their right of return to their homes. Our general evaluation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the current negotiation process leads to the conclusion that the possible solutions ignore the right of development as a basic right for Arab people. In fact, any course for a

sustainable and stable peace should respect and adhere to the right of development.

- Foreign military presence of the United States and NATO in the Arabian Gulf is an obstacle to the development and progress in that area. It is a continuous reason for the tension between countries of the region. This presence is also a manifestation of hegemony on oil resources, used in the struggle between global economic and political blocs on the expense of the people of the area.
- The economic embargo on two Arab countries, Iraq and Libya, is a major obstacle to the right of development in those countries. This is leading to major tragedies, especially in Iraq, and it is a violation of the most basic human rights, including the right to life

Second. The people of the Arab World suffer from civil wars, inner struggles, and acts of violence that threaten the stability of society, states, and even national unity. These struggles should not be seen only as a result of regional and external factors – if they exist – , internal factors and government policies should bear the main responsibility. Solving these internal struggles is a major and unavoidable condition for development in the Arab World. The solutions should be based on discussion and reaction between all concerned parties, consultation between governments and civil society, spreading democracy, and solving socioeconomic problems. The Arab NGO Network for Development recommends that international organizations, governments, and the non-governmental sector promote social development as a solution to internal struggles and a guarantor of stability and civil peace.

Third. The lack of a comprehensive and complete concept of democracy in the Arab World, the weakness of democratic practices, and the lack of honest elections in some countries and their nonexistence in others does not provide for a political, economic, social, legal, or cultural environment for Sustainable Human Development. This also does not encourage the role of local communi-

ties in the active participation in guiding the development process according to their needs and priorities. The Arab NGO Network for Development insists that the priority is the reform of political structures on the foundation of division of powers, judicial autonomy, the reinforcement of the concept of citizenry, the respect of public freedoms, diversity, and social integration. This reform is the obligatory entryway to the development and progress of Arab societies in many fields.

Fourth. The Arab NGO Network for Development believes that participatory development cannot be achieved if not linked to radical reform and the adoption of the concept "good governance" especially in the wise and effective administration of resources and defining the role of the public sector and other development partners.

Fifth. Civil society organizations in the Arab World, which are in the early stages of formation, face a number of obstacles that threaten their existence and continuity and limit their progress, developmental role, and ability to build a strong, affective, and democratic civil society. One of the main obstacles is legislation and laws that limit the freedom, legitimacy, and autonomy of Arab NGO work and the possibility of reducing the intensity of polarization, extremism, and internal violence and fighting all forms of ethnic, religious, and sectarian discrimination. On the other hand, there is the priority of increasing the social role of women; changing their stereotypical image; ensuring their economic, political, and social rights; the elimination of all forms of discrimination against them; and considering their rights as intrinsic and undiminished human rights. This should reflect on the programs, goals, and mechanisms of governments and Arab NGOs.

Sixth. Arab NGOs are following, with great distress, the expanding poverty in the Arab region, and its negative social, economical and political impacts. Beside the various structural elements resulting from the lack of democracy, good governance and unbalanced economic policies that do not respond to the

priorities and needs of arab societies, there are important additional factors namely the globalization of the world economy, the implementation of structural adjustment programs and economic liberalization, and increasing external debt. Global economic and political mechanisms played a divisive role in erosion of financial, especially oil, resources. Starting in the last few decades and until this moment, major industrialized nations and multinational corporations used the mechanisms of the world economy to usurp the monetary surplus resulting from the two major shocks of the increase of oil prices. They were able to reduce the price of crude oil to a price lower than that of 1973. They encourages Arab governments, especially the oil producing ones, to import weapons and employ a lavish mode of consumption that impaired development in those countries and served the economies of the center. In the 90's, the oil sources were controlled militarily and directly. Financial resources of Gulf countries were diverted to subsidizing the foreign military presence. This reality has deprived the people of the Arab World from tremendous resources, which would have been able –at least theoretically –to solve some development problems. The Arab NGO Network for Development calls for the review of external debts in the Arab World and the elimination of a large portion of the debt, reinvesting it in an independent development fund for the Arab World, with international and national partnerships and the NGO sector as an effective partner. This would aim to solidify economic and social policies that are consistent with the reality, abilities, and needs of Arab societies.

Seventh. Arab NGOs are monitoring, with great distress, the systematic destruction of the environment and the irrational use of natural resources and wealth. This is augmented by the absence of wise environmental legislation laws, and policies leaving dangerous negative effects on today's generations and threatening the future of tomorrow's generations. This affects the issue of water resources, since, until today, there have been no efforts to sensitize Arab citizens on the diminishing supply of water in the region. Arab NGOs will pressure governments on environmental issues and spread environmental awareness in order to create policies that would protect natural wealth and re

sources, and legislate environmental laws that concur with Sustainable Human Development.

Eighth. Under the current highly complex global changes and the move towards more polarization and hegemony on the global level, Arab NGOs are struggling to deepen and strengthen their partnership with other NGOs in the South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America). The aim is to achieve common goals and interests especially on the issues of reinforcing democracy, the respect of Human Rights, development, social justice, and facing the challenges of globalization and its outcomes. Arab NGOs are also striving to deepen and develop their relations with partners in the North on the basis of equality, equity, mutual respect, and common interests. This is in hope of establishing a manner of relations between the peoples of the North and those of the South –including NGOs –counter to the hegemony and subordination that characterizes the relations of governments and corporations.

Arab NGO Network for Development

Coordination Committee

12 / 3 / 2000

Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Copenhagen + 5 Social Summit (Geneva 2000) Brumana - Lebanon 5-6 December 1999

Final Declaration and Recommendations

On 5 and 6 December 1999, the Arab NGO Network for Development organized the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the follow-up to the WSSD to be held in Geneva, June 2000. The meeting was attended by 81 representatives from 70 Arab, European, and international NGOs. During the two days, they discussed the basic and fundamental issues on the agenda of the Geneva Summit, in particular, issues related to the eradication of poverty and unemployment and social integration in the Arab world. Also discussed were the basic aspects of a plan of action for Arab NGOs to affect social policies in their respective countries and initiate their participation in the upcoming summit.

The participants discussed an Arab working paper containing the basic principles of human development in the Arab world, on the human, economic, and social levels; and the challenges facing NGOs in the Arab world. They also discussed policy papers on the issues of poverty and development in selected Arab countries as well as a general report on poverty in the Arab World, which will be the basis for activities in the upcoming summit.

The participants then commissioned the Coordination Committee of the Arab NGO Network for Development to create a coordination mechanism and follow-up on the recommendations of the meeting in cooperation with international organizations and regional networks concerned in preparing for the summit. They stressed on the necessity of coordination, cooperation, and network

ing in these final stages of preparation in order for Arab participation in the summit to be successful.

Finally the participants stressed that their governments should abide by the recommendations of the WSSD (Copenhagen 1995), especially on the following issues:

First. Working towards the creation of laws and regulations which facilitate the work of Arab NGOs especially association laws and other laws that support economic and social development and the equality of women.

Second. Stressing the role of governments in providing social safety nets, especially health insurance, pension, and special cases; in addition to supporting youth, women's and children's programs, since they are marginalized segments of the society.

Third. Stressing the role of national governments in supporting the education, health, and other social welfare sectors; in addition to stressing the important role of NGOs in those issues.

Fourth. Affecting the role of the private sector in economic development, providing a suitable investment atmosphere and developing laws and tax regulations based on social equity. The participants also stressed that structural readjustment programs should not harm the interests of weak and marginalized segments of the society.

Fifth. Working towards reducing unemployment, developing a comprehensive strategy for employment and job generation, supporting small and medium sized economic projects with emphasis on women, and creating human resource development programs in economic sectors.

Sixth. Stressing the necessity of democracy, the respect of human rights, and the linkage of human development processes with the economic and social

rights of Arab societies.

Seventh. Stressing the economic, social, and civil rights of all refugees in the Arab world especially Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and emphasizing their right of return to their homeland and refusing implantation projects.

Eighth. Stressing that the rights of Arab women are inalienable human rights and working to pressure governments and NGOs on providing the issue of women's equality the priority in national programs and plans, considering that this is a fundamental requirement for sustainable human development.

Ninth. Working towards creating a model for coordination between national governments, NGOs, and the private sector in order to achieve a Sustainable Human Development based on a clear vision.

Brumana, Lebanon

6/12/1999

DEVELOPMENT CAUCUS

7 April 2000

Statement to the PrepCom II of the UNGASS on Social Development

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished delegates,

On behalf of the NGOs from the Arab world, Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and the United States, we would like to express our deep concern. If progress made this week in preparing the Geneva 2000 Summit would be measured in terms of removing brackets from the text, we might be doing well. However, if we measure progress in terms of the quality of the text that has now remained, we are deeply disappointed.

Distinguished delegates,

We share with our colleagues from the Ecumenical Team the fear that the Political Declaration does not address the key challenges that we face in social development. We agree with them that the Political Declaration is in danger of watering down what was agreed in Copenhagen. With them we worry that the Political Declaration lacks vision. With them, we believe that after Seattle we can not escape to re-examine the relationship between globalisation and social development. The Political Declaration should be based on this reality.

Distinguished delegates,

We share with our colleagues in the Women's Caucus the concern that women are central to social development. In evaluating how we did, or did not progress on social development we are not engaging in a theoretical exercise. It is the daily life of people, and of women in particular, that we speak of. We discuss whether women are able to feed their children. We discuss

whether women are given the care they need when they give birth to the generation of the future. We discuss whether women are able to provide their children with education and health care. We can not discuss social development without including the real lives of women.

Distinguished delegates,

People world-wide are looking for leadership in the post-Seattle world. Seattle has give a clear message that globalisation may benefit a few, but does not benefit the majority of the people. In other words, the benefits of globalisation are not spread evenly. Despite years of rhetoric that globalisation would lead to economic growth, and that economic growth would lead to poverty eradication, this has not happened. As The Secretary General of the United Nations has pointed out, today there are more people living in poverty than five years ago.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The importance of the Copenhagen commitments was given in the acknowledgement of the intrinsic connection between social development and the enabling environment. Since 1995 millions of people, particularly in South-East Asia, have been thrown into poverty due to the financial crises. Hence, a review of the implementation of Copenhagen is not serious, unless it acknowledges the causes of the financial crises and offers solutions. The Geneva 2000 Declaration is not credible unless it gives some perspective on how the International Community intends to create financial stability and deals with problems caused by the movement of speculative capital and portfolio investment.

Distinguished delegates,

People have high expectations of the Geneva 2000 Summit. Social devel-

opment is close to the hearts of most. We believe that the Summit should be seen to be responsive to the main issues identified as problematic by our societies. We believe that in the year 2000, the Summit must address

1) the problems caused by the unsustainable burdens of debts which have built up further in developing countries since Copenhagen. World-wide people are convinced that the present system of lending and borrowing is profoundly unjust and that it is dominated almost entirely by creditors. This consensus must be reflected in the Geneva 2000 Summit.

Ladies and gentlemen

Words do not change the world. Nor does silence.

Leadership is built on political dialogue, and courageous leadership is built on facing the problems of society. There is a huge crisis in the international system. We believe that the UN is the most participatory and democratic institution based on the aspirations of humanity that we all share. We believe that your task is to give leadership in proposing changes in the international system in order to address the serious concerns that we have voiced. We strongly believe that we need these processes of political dialogue. And we also need to commit ourselves to remain engaged in these processes of political dialogue. We believe that the Summit has no credibility without political follow up and continuity. For this you must make a commitment to engage in another Summit in 2005 in order to discuss the implementation of the Commitments.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As representatives of civil society we offer our expertise, we offer our support and engagement in this process. But we also have to be clear that the failure of Seattle provided us with a warning.

Our leaders must listen to what our people have to say. You, our represen-

tatives, have to discuss what people are concerned about. The Geneva Summit must be unequivocally clear that we need a change of the direction in which we are faring and it must strongly address what people are worried about today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our objective is clear. We are preparing a 'People's Summit'. You can make the Geneva Summit a 'People's Summit'. But if you won't, we will. A 'People's Summit' we will have. We hope you will join us in our effort.

Thank you for your attention.

The Arab NGO Network for Development is based in Beirut-Lebanon. It was founded in 1996, as a gathering of 65 Arab NGO from 12 Arab Countries. (**Palestine, Egypt, Algeria, Tunis, Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan, Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon**).

Principles

1. Diversity, democracy, human rights, rule of law, mutual exchange, sustainable development and social Justice, taking into consideration the specific needs of each country, constitute the framework for reinforcing and developing civil society in Arab countries.
2. The principles of democracy and respect of the law form the basis of relations between NGOs and Arab governments. This includes the autonomous implementation of joint goals and programs based on partnership, the right of NGOs to participate in national and decision-making processes on social development as well as the right to participate in the planning, implementation, monitoring, follow-up, and evaluation of various development programs
3. Diversity of roles is a principle characteristic of NGOs ranging from service provision, influencing public policy, consciousness-raising to participation in the elaboration of economic, social and educational visions. Other NGO key roles involve the participation in strengthening the foundations of civil society and in defending marginalized social groups.
4. Structural Adjustment Programs and the imposition of a single development model contradict the basic tenets of diversity and democracy, and oppose the fundamental principles of international human rights conventions especially those related to the right for self-determination.
5. Local needs and priorities form the basis of Arab NGOs programs. Attempts to politicize funding and change local NGO program priorities consti-

tute a threat to social development and to the independence of Arab NGOs. Parity is the basis for establishing relationships of partnership and cooperation between Arab and international NGOs as well as UN organizations.

6. Democracy, voluntarism, transparency, accountability and institution building are the fundamentals for improving the developmental content of Arab NGO goals and are reached through the process of objective and critical assessment.

7. Strengthening the role of women in society, combating stereotyped images, protecting women's rights, and eliminating all forms of discrimination should be incorporated in the programs and goals of Arab NGOs.

8. Arab NGOs who agree with these principles also agree to cooperate with other NGOs and networks, to improve coordination, and to strengthen relations in the service of common goals.

Goals

1. To strengthen and develop the role of NGOs in Arab societies in order to contribute in creating the foundations of a democratic civil society.

2. To accentuate the important role of non-governmental human rights organizations in Arab countries in the context of the respect of laws, international conventions, and the international declaration on human rights.

3. To work towards reviewing legislation governing Arab NGOs in order to increase their independence and freedom.

4. To strengthen solidarity with member organizations in situations of crisis.

5. To develop and strengthen the links between various Arab NGOs, both

members and non-members, and to coordinate between their different fields of action. To develop and strengthen the coordination links with other networks and committees as well as with UN and international governmental and non-governmental agencies.

6. To exchange information and expertise and develop the means, skills, capabilities, and resources of member organizations in the managerial, institutional, programmatic, and professional spheres.

Mechanisms

1. Conducting various research studies on the concepts of development, civil society, democracy, and Arab NGO constitutions.

2. Organizing seminars, conferences, workshops and periodic meetings for Arab NGOs to debate issues of democracy and civil society, develop action plans to strengthen solidarity, and form advocacy and lobbying groups.

3. Developing a comprehensive information system on all Arab NGOs, their goals and activities, and disseminating the information to all interested parties on the local Arab and global levels.

4. Publishing a news periodical and other publications that would expand the dialogue and coordination among Arab NGOs and promote their activities.

5. Building funding mechanisms and reaching self-sustainability.

6. Developing and exploring other mechanisms that would fulfill the above goals.