

## **ROUNDTABLE**

Recent developments in the North African region

Issues and perspectives for morocco?

**WORD OF INTRODUCTION**

**MOHAMMED TAWFIK MOULINE**

**DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**

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**Royal Institute for Strategic Research (IRES)**

Avenue Azzaitoune, Hay Riad, Rabat 10100

Phone : +212 (0) 537.71.83.83 – Fax : +212 (0) 537.56.40.79

Email: [contact@ires.ma](mailto:contact@ires.ma)

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure to welcome you today at the Royal Institute of Strategic Studies (IRES) in the form of this roundtable, organized in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and is devoted to a topic of current affairs. It is a topic that is debated throughout the world. It is the developments in the North African region, which led to the collapse of the regimes in Tunisia and Egypt and the ongoing regime in Libya.

From the outset it should be noted that the topic under review is at the heart of the scientific concerns of the IRES in terms of social cohesion. The Institute has undertaken since late 2008 a program of study entitled 'Social Link: what role do the state and all social actors play?'. Under this program, several studies have been developed relating to, among others, social movements protest, corruption, trust in institutions, identity tensions, cultural, religious, social and spatial inequalities and Moroccan youth's expectations.

Let me remind you that by its strategic watch mission, the IRES has a particular interest in international issues and particularly those relating to Maghreb and Euro-Mediterranean neighboring countries. This interest is illustrated through several monitoring work carried out to monitor the changing International context in its various dimensions, identify its key issues and derive lessons for Morocco.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The events in the region of North Africa are not epiphenomena circumscribed in time and space. A prove therefore is that their wave shocks are felt today not only in many countries of the MENA region, but also in other countries.

Although they are surprised by their intensity and speed in terms of their spread in comparison to other countries, these events result from an accumulation of deficits in the human rights and social cohesion. They reflect a great thirst for democracy and revealed in their substrate the limits of approaches that are purely security-related; all to reduce the political and social tensions.

the influential popular demands, especially those of the youth, have constituted the inflection point that has completely altered the sociopolitical disadvantage of regimes and opened the way for the transition to a more open and inclusive political and social order.

If the endogenous nature of these changes is recognized, the importance of external considerations cannot be ignored. The change scenarios of countries in the region depend to a large extent on the maturation of their internal conditions as well as the support of the international community in favor of changing to more democratic regimes.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Morocco, a country resolutely committed to the path of reform for quite long. Morocco is a country where legitimacy of power rests on its Constitutional monarchy, which is also unanimity of all components of society, displays particular features compared to its neighboring countries and the Arab Maghreb.

It has a significant head start in building democracy, has made many economic and financial reforms and is making significant progress at the social level. These advances are corroborated by its accession to advanced status within the framework of its relations with the European Union which gives the country a preferred position over other southern Mediterranean partners.

However, its major challenges is to accelerate the ongoing reforms and implement the second generation reforms, within the frame of a new social compact and a comprehensive constitutional reform for which His Majesty The King called in the occasion of Economic and Social Council establishment and the Royal Speech to the nation dated March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In order to adequately address the socio-political transformations in effect in certain countries in the region of North Africa, it will be appropriate to give some answers to following questions:

- What are the characteristics of the protests leading to above listed events? And what are the factors that led to the collapse of regimes in place?
- What weight should be attributed respectively to endogenous and exogenous factors in triggering these events?
- Would such changes be limited to run-out-of-legitimacy regimes or would they benefit from the domino effect and spread rapidly all over other countries in the region?
- What are the possible scenarios for the future of the region: Especially integration prospects for Maghreb region and the future of Euro-Mediterranean project?
- Finally, what challenges and lessons learned from these changes can be derived to benefit Morocco?

Those are some issues that should frame our discussion. The presence of a panel of senior experts is an opportunity to better understand the current changes, to review possible evolution scenarios and identify current and future challenges for Morocco and for all other countries in the region.

Before beginning the work of this panel, I want to thank all speakers and participants for responding positively to our invitation. I wish you a very fruitful discussion.