

## **Democracy and development**

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*Check against delivery*

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## **Introduction – Transparency International & Mohammed Bouazizi**

Your Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen

I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today alongside such prestigious speakers and great statesmen. This is testimony, if one was needed, to the increasing space the European Union gives to civil society

There was a time when civil society could not be given such a platform. Until very recently, it always seemed to me that in many parts of the world, those in power thought that civil society, if anything at all, should be seen and not heard.

Unfortunately that is still the case in some parts of the world. I think it is safe to say that a government that does not listen to civil society will miss hearing the cry of its most vulnerable citizens.

That was certainly the case in Tunisia until a year ago. The deafness of those in power drove Mohammed Bouazizi to set himself on fire outside a government office that had turned a deaf ear to his complaints of abuse.

This young man was trying to find a way to put bread on the table for his family

He bought fruit and vegetables on credit, and tried to sell them without a permit. Then the inspectors came looking for bribes which he could not afford. When they confiscated his cart and beat him up, his complaints to their superiors were ignored.

Instead, Mohamed Bouazizi paid the supreme price, and his family must now go on without him.

People should not have to go through this kind of suffering just to stay alive. Yet, there are many other stories like this, in many countries, every day.

Ladies and gentlemen, if our projects, our commitments and our goals are to be worth anything, they must make sure the voices of the Mohammed Bouazizi's of this world are heard.

Let us not forget what he gave his life for in the discussions that will follow.

## **1. MDGs & aid effectiveness**

Foremost among our concerns are the Millennium Development Goals. 2015 is fast approaching, yet I fear there are many barriers blocking the way the point we can say, these goals will be met.

We make progress when governments abolish enrolment costs and other fees, so that parents do not have to pay for the education of their children.

But, we lose this progress when we fail to ensure that school fees are not demanded illegally.

Unaccountable aid fuels corruption and mismanagement. Aid that supports citizen participation in budgets, access to information training and complaint hotlines, fuels accountability.

That is why the EU's wider commitment to the International Aid Transparency Initiative, seen at the Aid Effectiveness Conference in Busan is heartening.

Accountable aid is effective aid.

## **2. Durban – climate change**

The transparency challenge is no longer limited to development. The EU and other donors are gearing up to spend vast sums of money to face the challenges of climate change.

The money must be spent with the highest standards of transparency and accountability.

It may be too late to stop the waters rising, but all our efforts will be swept away if we do nothing to turn the tide on rising corruption.

In times of global austerity the EU role as the largest development donor in the world remains crucial. However, with this leadership role comes the responsibility to ensure stringent accountability in the use of funding.

### **3. Stolen Assets**

Earlier this year President Barroso announced, a new neighbourhood policy that prioritised good governance and civil society. This continues a fine European tradition of leading the way on supporting good governance in development assistance.

It was heartening to see the EU follow up on this commitment by responding to the Arab Spring with freezing of assets.

However, many of us in Africa are confused about something. How is so much money allowed to find its way into the banks of countries that are supposed to have laws that prevent money laundering? Those same banks whom the European taxpayer bails out.

This is confusing for us in Africa, who for years have been learning about debt repayment the hard way.

At a low estimate, the money and assets from Arab Spring countries frozen by western governments is almost half the amount spent on official aid in 2010.

Do not let the banks profit from their failure. While the long legal steps needed for stolen public money to be returned are completed, let the money sit with development banks in escrow accounts that could be used to repair the damage wrought by corruption, poverty and war.

## **Conclusion**

I was pleased to note that the EU's recent development policy - "Agenda for Change" – has made much welcomed commitments to support civil society and good governance.

Action right here can reinforce these priorities in Europe.

For starters, ensure the transparency of multinational companies acting in the same countries that receive development aid. The European Commission made proposals in this direction this autumn. I hope that they receive swift passage, without being watered down.

The promotion of good governance starts at home.

Gandhi said, "we should be the change we seek", the now departed great performer Michael Jackson echoed these words with an amazing twist when he sang

I'm Starting With The Man In  
The Mirror  
I'm Asking Him To Change  
His Ways

If You Wanna Make The  
World A Better Place  
Take A Look At Yourself, And  
Then Make A Change