

Arab League

16th Session of the Arab Summit

Tunis Declaration

Tunis, May 23, 2004

We, the Leaders of the Arab States, meeting at the Summit Conference of the Arab League Council in its 16th ordinary session held in Tunis, the capital of the Republic of Tunisia, on May 22-23, 2004 :

- " Committed as we are to the principles upon which the League of Arab States was founded and to the objectives enunciated in its Charter, as well as to the noble universal values spelled out in the United Nations Charter and to all the instruments of international legality;
- " Taking into account the new world changes and the challenges and stakes they generate;
- " Determined to pursue efforts in order to strengthen the solidarity and cohesion of the Arab Nation, and to consolidate the Arab ranks, in the service of our primordial causes.

Declare the following:

1.1 - The commitment of all international parties to materialize the principles of international legality and the UN resolutions pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict, without excluding any of the legal references of the peace process, constitutes the basis for a just, comprehensive and durable settlement to this conflict, in accordance with the Arab peace initiative and in implementation of the "Roadmap".

The international community should join its efforts so as to provide the necessary protection for the Palestinian people against the continuing acts of killing and deportation they are enduring, and also to put an end to the policy of assassination perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinian political leaders, to the siege imposed on the Palestinian people and their leadership, as well as to the aggressions targeting civilians without distinction. Joining these efforts would pave the way for the resumption of peace talks and would enable the brotherly Palestinian people to recover their legitimate rights, in the forefront of which the establishment of their independent state with East El-Quds as its capital, as well as the evacuation of all the Arab occupied territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan and the Lebanese Chabâa Farms.

1.2 - Achieving these legitimate objectives would provide propitious conditions for building confidence and for establishing a just, durable and comprehensive peace in the region, by convening an international conference aimed at ridding the Middle-East region, including Israel, of the weapons of mass destruction,. This will lay the foundations for a new era of entente, based on a mutual commitment to peace as a strategic choice, and will enable the Arab Nation and all countries in the

region to focus their efforts on taking up the challenges confronting them and on pursuing the development action.

1.3 - The Arab community is committed to support the Iraqi territorial integrity and to respect the sovereignty, independence and national unity of sisterly Iraq, and exhorts the Security Council to give a central and active role to the United Nations in Iraq in order to put an end to the occupation and prepare the ground for the transfer of power to the Iraqi people. This will make it possible to establish peace and stability and to launch the process of reconstruction in Iraq.

Entrusting an Arab troika (the current chairmanship, the previous chairmanship and the next chairmanship of the summit, along with the Arab League Secretary-General) with making the necessary contacts and following up the evolution of the situation in Iraq.

1.4 - Reaffirming the Arab solidarity with sisterly Syria in the face of the American sanctions, and underlining the necessity to favor the logic of dialogue and mutual understanding in settling conflicts among states, so as to spare the region at this critical juncture further tension and instability.

1.5 - Reaffirming the sovereignty of sisterly United Arab Emirates on its three islands and supporting all peaceful steps and initiatives that lead it to recover this sovereignty.

1.6 - Reaffirming the Arab states' solidarity with the sisterly Republic of Sudan, and their determination to preserve its unity and territorial integrity and to reinforce all peace endeavors undertaken by the Sudanese government in conjunction with the international and regional parties.

1.7 - Reaffirming the unity and sovereignty of the sisterly Republic of Somalia, and supporting the efforts aimed at achieving national conciliation, peace and stability in this country.

1.8 - reaffirming the determination to consecrate the national unity of the sisterly United Republic of Comoros, to preserve its territorial integrity and sovereignty, and to support all peace efforts in this country.

We also assert our firm determination :

2.1 - To materialize our common will to develop the system of joint Arab action, through the Tunis Summit resolution to amend the Arab League Charter and to modernize its work methods and its specialized institutions, based on the various Arab initiatives and ideas included in the proposals put forward by the Secretary General as well as on a consensual and coherent vision and on a gradual and balanced approach.

2.2 - To reaffirm our states' commitment to the humanitarian principles and the noble values of human rights in their comprehensive and interdependent dimensions, to the provisions of the various international conventions and charters, and to the Arab Human Rights Charter adopted by the Tunis Summit, as well as to the reinforcement of the freedom of expression, thought and belief and to the guarantee of the independence of the judiciary.

2.3 - Endeavor, based on the Declaration on the process of reform and modernization in the Arab world, to pursue reform and modernization in our countries, and to keep pace with the rapid world changes, by consolidating the democratic practice, by enlarging participation in political and public life, by fostering the role of all components of the civil society, including NGOs, in conceiving of the guidelines of the society of tomorrow, by widening women's participation in the political, economic, social, cultural and educational fields and reinforcing their rights and status in society, and by pursuing the promotion of the family and the protection of Arab youth.

2.4 - To consolidate the comprehensive development programs and intensify efforts aimed at promoting the educational systems, at disseminating knowledge and encouraging its acquisition, and at fighting illiteracy in order to ensure a better future for the Arab young generations.

2.5 - To achieve economic complementarity among Arab States on the basis of the exchange of benefits and the interdependence of interests, and to endeavor to pursue the upgrading of the Arab economies by entrusting the Economic and Social Council with establishing a joint Arab economic and social action strategy, in such a way as to consolidate the competitiveness of the Arab economy and empower it to establish a solidarity-based partnership with the various economic groupings in the world.

2.6 - To consecrate the values of solidarity and mutual assistance among the Arab states, as part of the Arab anti-poverty strategy adopted by the Tunis Summit, to mobilize all human potentialities in the Arab countries in support of the development efforts, and to endeavor to upgrade the economy of the least developed Arab countries and promote their development programs.

2.7 - Be prepared, as best as possible, to actively participate, at the level of governments, civil society and the private sector, in the World Summit on the Information Society whose second phase will be hosted by Tunisia in November 2005, so that this event will constitute an important opportunity to further promote the position of information and communication technologies in the Arab development plans, and reinforce the capacity of Arab countries to keep up with and contribute to the evolution witnessed in this sector which is one of the basic foundations of development.

2.8 - To take appropriate measures to enable the Arab Organization for Information and Communication Technologies to play its role in consolidating inter-Arab cooperation in this vital sector.

2.9 - To strengthen the bonds of friendship between Arab countries and other countries of the world, and to establish a new approach for solidarity-based cooperation and partnership with them, based on our determination to consecrate dialogue among religions and cultures and to highlight the civilisational and humanist mission of Islam which calls for disseminating the values of tolerance, concord and peaceful coexistence among peoples and nations, and rejects hatred and discrimination.

2.10 - To reaffirm the commitment of Arab States to pursue their contribution to the international efforts exerted to stand against and combat all forms of terrorism, avoid confusing Islam with terrorism and differentiate between legitimate resistance and terrorism.

2.11 - To call for the holding of an international conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, in order to establish an international code of ethics for the fight against terrorism, while working to tackle the root causes of this phenomenon.

3 - We express our deep thanks and high consideration to His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia, for his experience, insightfulness, and open-mindedness in managing our Summit proceedings. We are convinced that under his chairmanship of the Summit, the process of joint Arab action will witness further progress, and that the status of the Arab Nation among the nations of the world will be further reinforced.

Our thanks and appreciation also go to the Republic of Tunisia for having hosted the Summit Conference of the Arab League Council in its 16th ordinary session and for its meticulous preparation, in consultation with the Arab countries, in order to ensure optimum conditions for the organization of the Summit. We also commend the efforts exerted by the Arab League Secretary General in this regard.

Tunis, May 22-23, 2004.