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REPORT ON

**THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
“ YOUTH PUBLIC POLICIES:
CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS ”**



OCTOBER 28, 29 2017, IBIS HOTEL-AGDAL, RABAT

Opening Remarks:

The opening session of the international workshop on "Youth Public Policies: Challenges and Prospects" started with a welcome speech addressed by Mr. Yassine Bezzaz, general coordinator of Prometheus Institute, to the attendants, welcoming foreign guests who undertook long and tiring travel to attend the workshop, and praising the cooperation and support accorded by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung to the Institute.

Mr. Bezzaz pointed out in his speech that youth face multifaceted problems and challenges, among which the absence of an international human rights framework that accounts for youth's rights. He also argued that youth issues seem not to be of priority in the crafting of public policies, which are always horizontal-wise, and that youth movements worldwide have never been youth-oriented in their rallies for the entrenchment of democracy. The youth who lead change usually do not reap the fruits of their struggle, and are not brought to leading management positions in their countries, especially that a large part of youth sectors are run by people far from the youth area. Mr. Bezzaz concluded his speech by thanking the audience, and hoping that the workshop will host fruitful debates during the two days.

The representative of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung delivered a welcome speech on behalf of the Foundation, and expressed her warm wishes for the workshop to succeed. She also shed light on different problems faced by young people, who, according to her, constitute a national wealth for Morocco, as they make up 30% of the population.

Among the youth challenges she stated dropping out of school, unemployment, and the weak political participation. She argued that this alarming situation needs the serious involvement of all the actors, and praised the role of the workshop, and the expected recommendations that will come out of it in response to some of the issues raised. At the end of her speech she applauded the successful partnership with Prometheus Institute, especially in their focus on youth issues, and renewed her welcome to the attendants.

THE FIRST PANEL:

The challenges facing the implementation of youth public

Speakers:

- » Ms. Zoubaida El Msseffar, UNESCO.
- » Mr. Mustafa Benrehho, an expert in youth public policies.
- » Mr. Khalid Talima, former Deputy Minister of Youth, Egypt.
- » Mr. Salah Abdel Rahman, civil actor from Algeria.

Ms. Zoubaida El Msseffar, a UNESCO representative, opened the workshop's presentations, focusing on UNESCO's experience in public policy work on youth, and pointed to the centrality of youth issues in most of the UNESCO projects.

She also stressed the need to involve young people at all levels, both in diagnosis, in practice and in monitoring and evaluation.

After that, she underscored the key elements of the public policy for youth, stating the following:

- Youth public policy should respond to and put accent on the human rights approach and international conventions;
- The involvement of young people and groups in a vulnerable situation, women, people with special needs and migrants;
- Taking into account gender equality in diagnosis and formulation of youth public policies;
- Updating quantitative and qualitative data on youth;
- The development of financial and logistical resources for the success of policies;
- Transparency;
- Access to information as a fundamental right;
- Continuous assessment.

Ms. El Msseffar proceeded to identify some of the challenges that hinder the success of public policies for youth, including:

- Lack of coordination among stakeholders;
- The weak resources allocated;
- Inefficiency, especially in the concretization of policies on the ground;
- Ineffective inter-sectorial communication, and institutional communication with the public;
- The adoption of different policy approaches among sectors.

Additionally, the speaker maintained that the same challenges are prevailing in all the States of the region, which seems to impede the development of public policies for young people; a situation that needs as prerequisite the political will.

At the end of her intervention, Zoubaida El Mseffar raised the question of the importance of drafting an international convention for youth, and whether it can be an effective and motivating mechanism for countries to consider youth as a social group with special rights and demands.

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Mr. Mustafa Benrehho, a public policy expert, began his remarks by giving some inputs on the topic of youth public policies as a contribution to the debate. He emphasized that current times are marked by the aspiration of societies for change towards democratization and for more social, economic and cultural reforms, and youth are at the vanguard of this mobility. By gaining more attention as essential social and political actors that influence change trajectories in their communities, youth are increasingly raising demands for dignity, rights and social justice. They are no longer passive recipients of public policies, but are interestingly struggling for an active participation in the crafting of these policies. They are contributing a great part to constitutional reforms and to political affairs. This is something newfangled, since discussion about youth in the past used to be implicit, and not direct.

Benrehho stressed that young people refuse to address their issues from within the traditionalist approaches which proved invalid, which is a fact that all indicators confirm. The speaker praised the strong emergence of civil society, which contributed to the liberation of society and the dismantling of guardianship to make quantum leap in society.

He has also criticized the verticality of youth public policies, which remained disjointed, not intersecting, and lacking temporal wisdom. Benrehho evoked many observations concerning youth policies, including the lack of integrated government policies, the flawed approach that considers youth a target and not a partner, and the lack of studies on youth issues.

Benrehho has also raised the point that youth issues should be managed with a new generation of policies that take advantage of the international charters and conventions crafted by the United Nations and the League of Arab States, and which have always drawn attention to the imbalances in policy making. He stressed the need for a national non-sectorial and integrated policy, which ensures comprehensiveness and coordination between all sectors in order to respond to the needs of young people.

After that, Mr. Benrehho switched to talk about the challenges that need to be raised by young people. A national youth law should be enacted to provide a legal foundation for youth's needs, with reference to the international principles and requirements, noting that public policies should be forged based on these international normative frameworks. Benrehho has also stressed the need for a specialized government body for the national youth policy, which seems to be scattered between sectors.

This national policy should reflect regional and territorial variations, especially that youth policies should necessarily emanate from and respond to local social and demographic specificities. He concluded by underscoring the need to strengthen local youth councils.

In conclusion, Professor Benrehho argued that social justice is the key answer to youth problems and, according to him, the root causes of these problems are the inadequacies related to social justice.

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Mr. Salah Abdel-Rahman, the civil actor from Algeria, spoke about the similarities in the Maghreb region between the various challenges faced by young people. These similarities are due to the shared demographic and social characteristics in these countries, including the high percentage of youth. The speaker considered that the struggle for the implementation of youth public policies suggests that these policies already exist, but the question is mainly about how far these policies are concretized, and the degree of seriousness and commitment by the public authority to implementing them, as it becomes unquestionably absurd to forge policies and programs without bringing them into play.

Abdel-Rahman underlined the need to get out of the narrow understanding of public policies, which are reduced to areas of sports and recreation. He criticized this constricted conception set by governments, by putting the sectors of youth and sports together. He then presented the experience of Algeria with regard to the reluctance and unwillingness to establish consistent youth policies and programs. Many experiences tell about this reluctance. One of them is the dissolution of the Supreme Council for Youth, which was set up as an advisory body, and later removed under a pretext of its overlapping roles with other youth sectors.

Years later, after the cabinet reshuffle in 2014, the Ministry of Youth was separated from the Ministry of Sports, which at that time was considered a heresy. But a year later, a new cabinet reshuffle brought together youth and sports under one ministry, which pushes us towards the conclusion that the State's position regarding youth issues is in fact deficient and very reductionist. The problem goes beyond the mere integration of youth sector with sport, but it entails an imbalanced allocation of budgets. A huge part of the funds goes to sports projects, and the rest that is devoted to youth is directed to construction of sports centers, while the concerns of young people are wider than that.

Abdel-Rahman noted with surprise that the generation of leaders who built post-independence Algeria were all young people who did not exceed the age of twenty-seventh, including the head of State who was at the age of twenty-seven. Yet, this experience did not last long, and it is rare to find a young man in a leadership position nowadays.

He concluded his intervention by directing his criticism to the Supreme Council of Youth, which is enshrined in the 2016 constitution, questioning the rationale behind making some sectors like the Ministry of Water Resources and the Ministry of Veterans represented in the Council, which seems to undermine the efficiency of this institution.

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At the beginning of his presentation, Mr. Khaled Talima, former Deputy Minister of Sports of Egypt, pointed to the existing similarity of the Egyptian experience with the Algerian experience evoked to by Salah Abdel Rahman, especially in the hesitancy and instability of institutions that deal with youth issues, moving from the National Council for Youth and the return of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, etc.

He then brought to limelight the situation of youth participation in public life before the revolution of 25 January 2011, and the subsequent stages leading to the youth revolution of January 25. He argued that despite the great role played by young people in the mass uprising in Egypt, the success of the revolution should not be completely attributed to them. Without the participation of all classes, groups and parties of the Egyptian people, we would not be able to overthrow the Mubarak regime.

He stated that after the revolution, "empowering young people" took the lead, and youth became at the heart of political discourse. Although the idea of putting young people as assistants to ministers and governors was prevalent, but young people called for a young minister to take over the ministry of youth.

Talima pointed to the reluctance among young people who were caught between the participation in the government and the fear to be instrumentalized against their interests. They eventually preferred to join the cabinet, where Mr. Khalid Talima took office as Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports. The Ministry of Youth and Sports in that period received huge budgets, which amounted to one billion pounds, not to ignore the large number of youth centers, which were previously exploited by families loyal to the ruling National Party. The challenge according to him was to make the ministry unbiased and accessible to all young Egyptians.

A number of obstacles that hinder the ministry's work were raised by the speaker, who exposed the power exerted by the Ministry of the Interior over the decisions of the other ministries, together with the bureaucratic complications, the blatant return to authoritarianism, where the Sisi regime exploits the terrorism issue to turn over the revolution.

Discussion Summary:

The discussion between the audience and the speakers can be summarized in the following points:

- » Emphasis on the importance of public policies for youth;
- » The marginalization of young people, being uninvolved in public policy making;
- » Youth bring change through the protests they lead, but they do not reap its fruits;
- » The similarities of youth issues in the Maghreb;

- » Mismatches and incompatibilities in determining the age of youth between international and national institutions;
- » The need to establish a national youth policy emanating from local and regional contexts;
- » Reluctance of young people to take responsibility and power, for fear of the reaction of society;
- » The heterogeneity of sectors responsible for youth issues;
- » Lack of continuity, where policies are reshaped with the change of officials.

THE SECOND PANEL:

The status in quo and the issues related to the youth

Speakers:

- » Ms. Yasmin Boutaib, Public Policy Researcher, Deputy General Coordinator of Prometheus Institute.
- » Mr. Ziad Zarai, Executive Director of the Alternative Youth Network, Raj-Tunisia
- » Mr. Mustafa Elyahyaoui, a university professor.
- » Mr. Mehdi Idrissi, researcher in political science.

The first speaker in the second panel was Mr. Mehdi Idrissi, who focused in his intervention on the findings of a diagnostic study on the expectations of young Moroccans, which was conducted in three Moroccan cities. Idrissi departed from a simple question: What do young Moroccans want today? and what are their demands? Are they political, social or economic? Do all young Moroccans have the same demands or do their demands differ according to the social milieu in which they live?

The results of this study were forwarded to the government as the executive authority, to the Parliament as the legislative authority, and to civil society as a partner in the preparation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies, especially after the adoption of the 2011 Constitution.

The researcher stated that the study was based on a collection of legal and constitutional documents, periodicals, research papers and reports related to the subject. Focus groups were also staged with about 60 young people representing civil society associations and political parties.

The study was carried out on two levels:

- **Level 1:** consultative meetings were organized to tackle the issues linked to youth in the economic sphere, their political participation and their social inclusion.
- **Level 2:** focus groups took aim at identifying all the strengths, constraints and opportunities available for young people, and a set of recommendations and solutions were proposed by the participating youth.

After the introduction on the methodology adopted, the researcher presented the summary, which was divided into three main axes, set as follows:

1. The need to integrate youth into the economic system, as most of young people rally for their integration into economic life, i.e. work and the management of their daily life;
2. Social integration of young people, namely through access to preferential social services such as train tickets;
3. The civic participation of youth, their representation in protest movements and civil society.

Furthermore, the speaker displayed testimonies of some of the participants interviewed in the study. One of the participants criticized "the denial by the actors of the demands of the youth, and the failure to fulfill the promises they make in the election campaigns. Employment is subject to nepotism, favoritism, family relations and corruption". Another participant said in a hopeless tone that he is "ready to join ISIS. At least there is a paradise and the virgins of Al-Hour Al-Eeen, and I can earn a leaving out of that."

Mehdi Idrissi summarized the demands of youth respondents in the following points:

- The need to harmonize university and vocational trainings with the national job market;
- The creation of university departments specialized in social and solidarity economy, and the allocation of the necessary funds;
- The State should assume its responsibility to provide job opportunities, and ensure social stability;
- The development of incentive conditions at the local levels to encourage investors;
- The respect of the principle of transparency in public transactions.

In spite of the fact that youth make a large proportion of the moroccan society, there still exists an exclusive patriarchal approach, which dominates the political and social spheres, and overlooks the contribution of youth to public life. The political actor, either consciously or unconsciously, believes that youth are unable to develop responses to their issues. Given the waning role of political parties and the stalemate in institutional life, young people took to the streets to defend their demands as an alternative.

Young people demand economic integration in the first place, then social integration, and in the third place they struggle for political integration. The speaker underlined the fact that youth are not and should not be seen as an identical homogenous group; their demands vary from center to the periphery, and therefore we must verify the reliability of the assumption that young people mainly struggle for political participation in the first place.

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Professor mustafa elyahyaoui presented a set of quantitative data that are important to understand public policies and processes of policy-making after the 20 february movement in 2011. Elyahyaoui raises the central question: what did moroccan youth achieve in 2011 to entrench democracy and ensure access to national wealth? He considers that seven years

after 20 february movement are sufficient, scientifically and methodologically, to assess the outcomes and the resulting reforms of these mass protests.

In light of this, professor elyahyaoui made two main assumptions:

- 1) if 20 february movement was led by moroccan youth, what is the share of these youth from the annual public expenditure after 2011? Did the state institutions give youth leading positions to carry on reforms in society?
- 2) or has the same culture prevailed, with no marked reformist endeavors undertaken in policy-making after 2011?

The speaker then moved to question the government proposal in response to the recommendations of un organizations on integrated youth policies adopted by morocco in 2014 through the ratification of the national youth strategy 2016-2030.

Based on a set of data gleaned from the databases of youth sectors, the engineering of youth budgets from 2002 to 2010 has been literally adopted in budget planning between 2012 and 2016, with a margin of approximately 5 per cent difference.

The professor came to the conclusion that, in practice, and away from state discourse, the level of public spending for young people did not change.

Mr. Elyahyaoui pointed out that the national youth strategy, which was approved by the government council in 2014, was not approved by the ministerial council, which politically suggests that the king does not want to ratify it, because in practice it is not enforceable and not mandatory for sectors. The integrated approach, he added, is not sound and will only generate the same improvements produced by the national development initiative. He argued that the best solution is to develop an inclusive approach to avoid pushing youth towards protests.

The only solution today, according to the speaker, is to move away from ideology, and to try to objectively tackle youth issues, by encouraging partnership between the state and the local collectivities, and by focusing on youth in marginal cities instead of focusing on major cities.

Mr. Ziad zarai from Tunisia, addressed youth issues based on some observations from his field experience in civil society. He stated that young people were the first drivers of change in most parts of the world, but they were not self-interested to harvest the fruits of change. Young people have not achieved any of their demands so far. Instead, a new political class has given birth to more looters of wealth. Civil society itself has witnessed the emergence of a rich class of human rights defenders in recent years.

He then turned to developing a self-critique that all youth should stimulate, referring to the internal shortcomings that lead to failures in youth-led movements. Zarai argued that young people can provide solutions to reinforce their position, the same as they can create problems, especially that youth movements are rifted due to the conflicts that erupt over leadership and prominence.

Zarai drew the attention of the audience to significant statistics that concern tunisian youth. First, more than 18% of Tunisia's young people are unemployed, and 95% do not participate in politics, while 48% do not trust local collectivities and do not place confidence in their deputies' work. On the other hand, 50% of tunisian youth do not trust the president, and 88% of them show dissatisfaction regarding the government performance. 54% of tunisians are between the age of 18 and 30, which suggests that the state governs a people with a majority of dissatisfied youth.

He also identified various problems underwent by tunisian youth, including unemployment, the privatization of education, the university crisis, the problem of precarious employment, and the retreat of the state from its responsibility to strengthen the economy, in addition to the administrative bureaucracy facing special initiatives.

Zarai argued that one of the most important issues not addressed by the other speakers is "the phenomenon of globalized jihadist terrorism," as youth are growingly marred in terrorist activity contaminating all lands from Paris to Nigeria and to Iraq. The speaker stressed the need to surpass the security approach, which proved invalid, noting that many artists who participated in the Tunisian revolution are now enmeshed in the war in Syria.

At the end of his intervention, zarai shed light on the important experience led by emergent civil organizations in Tunisia, including the manich m'sameh movement (no forgiveness movement), who protested against the law of administrative and financial reconciliation covering those involved in the bourguiba era and the era of zine el abidine ben ali. This movement, and in coordination with Tunisian and international organizations, has acted against this law, which pardons the spoilers in the former regime.

Youth are at the heart of the social and economic crisis, being the most touched by these effects;

Summary of the Discussion:

Comments from the audience on the interventions of the professors focused on the following points:

- Youth are at the heart of the social and economic crisis, being the most touched by these effects;
- The priority is the struggle for economic integration, and social and political integration later;
- Absence of studies and research on youth issues;
- The centrality of advocacy for youth issues, and the overlooking of marginalized urban youth;
- The to globalize youth issues, so that there becomes a broad youth solidarity with local issues.

PANEL THREE:

Youth issues in government programs

Speaker

- » Ms. Haifa Dweib, Project Officer, "Nawat.org" - Tunisia.
- » Mr. Yassine Esbouia, President of the Mediterranean Youth Forum FMEJ
- » Mr. Hassan Tariq, former member of the parliament, university professor and public policy expert.

Haifa dweib, a journalist and civil activist from Tunisia, stressed at the beginning of her speech that youth issues in government programs should take a preponderant position in the public debate, to come to a true identification of the challenges facing youth. The absence of the political will among the actors, she states, hampers the implementation of plans and programs that target youth.

Dweib thinks that by extricating youth issues from other social issues is a problem in itself, regarding the fact that youth make important contributions to the forging of policies that touch upon the whole society. Thus, youth should not be looked at as a fragile social group, for which we must set government policies and programs.

In the same vein, she tackled many of the problems raised by mr. Ziad zarai, including the issue of migration, brain drain and clandestine emigration, which results from the absence of jobs and corruption that prevents the participation of young people in public life, together with the impact of these conditions on social justice.

Dweib concluded her presentation by saying that government programs are manifest only in the general and sectorial budget, and in the budget of the ministry of youth and sports, while no impact of these programs is discernible on the ground.

Mr. Yassin esbouya, who chose to speak about "youth participation in the regional and local spheres, and in the management of the local collectivities", began his presentation with the following preliminary question: what are the programs initiated by the ministry of youth and sports that coordinates the integrated strategy for young people? And what age groups do they target?

The speaker emphasized that the same programs are reproduced without any evaluation or strategic vision, to the extent that the ministry concerned does not set the goals they aim to achieve out of these programs.

Esbouia invoked an example of a partnership program between the ministry of youth and the world bank on self-employment in startups, which indicates that, according to the ministry's figures, more than 500 participants, 48% were women, have benefitted from this program, beyond the expected results. However, these young participants declare that the program was of no practical impact on their daily lives. Esbouia concluded that the ministry does not adopt a scientific approach to assess such programs, and what is available are only abstract statistics that do not reflect the reality.

In the second part of the intervention, Mr. Esbouia discussed the issue of youth political participation at the local and regional levels. He pointed out that the organic law pertaining to the local collectivities provides for youth's participation in the consultation bodies. This legal text stipulates that an advisory body is to be established to deal with youth issues.

However, it does not state clearly whether this body is youth-led and run? Or is it a board of experts, not necessarily youth, who work on youth issues? The blurred nature of this institution justifies the discrepancies and incommensurability between regions in its implementation, as some of the regions seek to ensure exclusivity for youth in the formation of this consultation body, while others plan to establish boards of experts specialized in youth issues. These inconsistent regulations trigger controversies over the eligibility of members of the body, and their regional representation.

In conclusion, Mr. Esbouia pointed to the need to lay foundation for a national plan that raises the awareness of Moroccan youth about the regional specificities, and give priority to cultural exchange. Moroccan youth are in fact unaware of cultural diversity in Morocco. They are not familiar with challenges posed for youth of many regions on the margins, as travel programs for youth seem to focus on entertainment contents rather than on boosting knowledge and understanding of the history and culture of the places they visit. Finally, the speaker stressed that local differences between young people should be taken into account in any approach.

Mr. Hassan Tariq, a specialist in public policies, started his remarks by addressing the roots of the debate on national policies pertaining to youth, which emerged only 20 years ago, due to various international and national changes. At the international level, since the middle of the twentieth century, the human rights discourse has become inextricable from what is known as class rights, and we are witnessing the proliferation of a series of declarations on youth. There also emerged a tendency supporting the transition from human rights as a whole to human rights of groups. Since then, we have seen a bulky literature on the rights of young people, until the beginning of the third millennium where the concept of national youth policy has been largely underscored. The speaker has also put accent on the existing conceptual confusion in accounting for public policies between actors and analysts.

Tariq highlighted a number of prerequisites in order to establish a national youth policy:

- Adopting a reference document that provides for the commitment of the State and society to respond to youth needs as a large and important social category;
- The definition of major strategies for youth, by setting goals beyond the electoral agenda, and that consider the economic, social and socio-cultural conditions;
- A declaration by the top-level political power adopting such policies;
- The formulation of these policies should be the outcome of national consultations, research and studies;
- Widening the scope of participation of experts and actors in the formulation of the national youth policy;
- The need to create a mechanism for horizontal coordination between all public and civil stakeholders.

With these in mind, Mr. Tariq argued that there exists no clear social policy that responds to the needs of youth, which should normally be the core concern of the state towards the future generations.

He pointed out that the function of social policies is inclusion, and that the categorization of social policies undermines any endeavors to ensure social justice.

As a conclusion to his intervention, Mr. Tariq presented a set of observations on the government programs for youth:

- When appointing the Prime Minister, there is no crosscutting commitment to youth issues that goes beyond government programs, and draws legitimacy from a binding national consensus above the electoral agendas;
- Election campaigns seem to ignore youth concerns;
- What young people aspire for is far beyond the government programs;
- The administrative organization of youth sectors is not effectively responsive.

Summary of the Discussion:

The discussion between the audience and the speakers focused on the following points:

- Lack of strategic vision in addressing youth issues;
- The need to separate the youth sector from the sports sector;
- The need for integration of all sectors and institutions for the production of public policies;
- Absence of a clear societal project;
- Lack of evaluation to ensure the improvement of public policy;
- The multiplicity of actors and of approaches impacts negatively the coordination of public policies.

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