

**SEMINAR: *Food Security in the MENA Region: Participation of Civil Society and Associationism***



## **Words of welcome**

30th November 2011

**MÓNICA BOHIGUES**

General Secretary of the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (FPSC)



I am delighted to see you all here once again. More than 10 years have passed since 14th September 2001, when the FPSC decided to create the READI with your support and partnership, and it gives me great satisfaction to see that the association is still so alive, coming up with concrete ideas and suggestions every year and doing its bit to ensure that our combined efforts will help to achieve the millennium development goals in the Mediterranean region.

As you all know, the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture not only carries out development cooperation projects in the Mediterranean countries, but has also made a constant effort to foster and reinforce institutional and human relations between the two shores, which is why the Foundation promoted the creation of the READI.

The READI is now an entirely autonomous non-governmental development organization with its own projects, but it still has the full support of the FPSC, at every level, for the achievement of its goals.

Each one of your organizations represents a broad social sector of each represented country. The work of each organization in partnership with the FPSC has enabled us to jointly influence the development of our respective countries through the implementation of projects whose broad social scope covers the integration of

important segments of vulnerable populations, as well as to actively collaborate in the creation of our common Mediterranean area of dialogue, reflection and friendship, and to offer the international community, through the United Nations, the conclusions of our joint reflections.

Since 1992, the Foundation has allocated 54% of its development cooperation resources to the Mediterranean region. In partnership with many of you, the FPSC has already executed more than 198 projects in ten Middle East and North African countries (Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Mauritania, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt).

Many of these projects have directly contributed to the Millennium Development Goals, and it is worth emphasising that this contribution has been particularly significant in relation to three of these goals: access to education, eradication of poverty and equality between men and women.

This year, the situation in all the countries on both shores of the Mediterranean is a matter of great concern. To the south, uprisings have blighted nearly all the countries, leaving a trail of victims, civil wars and destruction. In many of these countries the situation remains unstable, whether economically, politically or socially, while on the northern shore, the economic crisis is putting many families out of work and leaving them without resources.

Unfortunately, there seems to be no quick and easy solution to this situation, and everything suggests that it will continue for some time to come.

It is worth remembering that the uprisings in the Arab world were sparked by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, the Tunisian street vendor who reached a point of despair once he had been deprived of his livelihood and could no longer support and feed his family.

The most important causes of the current uprisings have been the increase in youth unemployment and rising food prices. Therefore, this year's chosen topic for our collective consideration, food security, is crucial for millions of households that are suffering the negative effects of the rise in food prices.

For those of us here today, this is another opportunity to join forces and make a joint effort to offer our conclusions and specific recommendations, with the aim of continuing to build a society in the Mediterranean which must be peaceful and defend justice, the fundamental freedoms and public liberties. By doing so, we will be able to overcome the temptation of confrontation.

I wish you all a fruitful day.