



**6th Retreat of the Association of Senates, Shoora and Equivalent Councils
in Africa and the Arab World (ASSECAA), 24th – 25th September 2014, in
Amman, Kingdom of Jordan**

Final Communiqué

At the kind invitation of the Speaker of Al Ayan Council of the Kingdom of Jordan, H.E Dr. Abdulraouf Al Rawabidah, the Association of senates, Shoora and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World (ASSECAA) held its sixth Retreat in Amman, the capital city of the Kingdom of Jordan from the 24th to the 25th of September, 2014. The Retreat had as its theme “**The Role of Parliaments in Combating corruption, Conflicts and promoting Regional Integration**” attracted participants from many member councils/senates, high government officials of the Kingdom of Jordan, members of the diplomatic community resident in Jordan and other regional organizations. The media, both print and broadcast and the academia were not left out.

Attendance

The under-listed member shoora, senates and equivalent councils in Africa and the Arab world attended the meeting.

1. Kingdom of Bahrain
2. Republic of Yemen
3. Republic of Algeria
4. Republic of Zimbabwe
5. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
6. Republic of Burundi
7. Kingdom of Morocco
8. Republic of Cameroon
9. State of Qatar
10. Republic of Sudan
11. Republic of Namibia

12. Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

The Arab Parliamentary Union and Union of Arab- Maghreb countries were also present as observer.

Opening Ceremonies

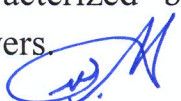
The retreat kicked off at about 09:30 at the chambers of the Al Ayan Council with an opening speech from the Secretary General of ASSECAA, Mr. Abdulwasie Yusuf Ali in which he extended special gratitude to the Speaker of Mejlis Al-Ayan of Jordan, who made it possible for us to meet in Jordan and also thanked participants for finding the time and responding positively to the invitations.

He stated that matters like Corruption and Conflicts can never be discussed lightly in a gathering such as the retreat. They call for grief and agony and questioning of our consciences on how these evils happen in our society.

Despite the fact that the regions of Africa and the Arab World are located in strategic places of advantage in the world; that we are endowed with over a billion man power; that we are blessed with immense natural resources comprising of minerals, petrol, natural gas, extensive fertile land together with big rivers and heavy rains yet we have not been able to emerge as world economic power. Corruption and conflicts are to be blamed for our woes.

In his welcome address, the President of the Al Ayan council of the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan, H.E Dr. Abdulraouf Al Rawabidah said that the meeting is being held in Jordan, the country of detente, accord, multiplicity and co-existence among all national components. He noted that Jordan is also the highly-endowed nation of security, stability and democracy which emanate from the values and traditions that open up to global experiences.

He pointed out that the world in general and the region in particular are currently experiencing a plethora of radical changes, as the major superpowers are trying to infiltrate into, and reshape our societies based on their interests. He highlighted that the region is witnessing a vibrant popular mobility characterized by raging conflicts among local, regional and international powers.



He underlined that poverty, unemployment , and underdevelopment , as well as the absence of democracy and human rights all create a breeding ground for extremist movements.

He emphasized the importance of conducting serious studies on all the issues affecting people's lives and their orientations, and leading to good governance and comprehensive reforms in such a manner that improves the quality of life , preserve human dignity, and enables people take part in decision-making.

He finally touched upon Jordan's experience on carrying out sustained political and economic reforms by reconsidering the constitution, laws and economic conditions.

The Chairman of ASSECAA and Speaker of the House of the Federation of parliamentarians and other participants to join hands together in this fight against corruption and conflicts. He argued that corruption is a cankerworm that has eaten and continues to eat the fabrics of our society and if left without any tangible action, then the future of our different economies is bleak.

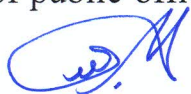
He supports the opinions shared by researchers that corruption could trigger political and economic volatility. Corruption has robbed us of a cardinal element of legitimacy. It can lead to widespread social unrest and discourage foreign direct investment. Menacingly, it facilitates the pilfering of financial resources from the downtrodden into the pockets of the political leadership.

On the conflicts that go on in our regions, he stated that the two regions (Africa and the Arab Countries) are in chaos. No day passes without a war or a rumour of war in one country or another. Our citizens are dying not in hundreds but in thousands in every event. We must find a way to stop the senseless killings.

Papers presentation and discussions

During the afternoon session of the first day, the meeting commenced study and consideration of the theme of the retreat “**The Role of Parliaments in Combating corruption, Conflicts and promoting Regional Integration**”.

Two papers were presented on the first day. The first was on “Impact of Corruption on the Economic Development of Africa and Arab Countries.” Presented by Prof. Omar Al- Hadrami, Faculty Hussein Bin Abdullah II of International Studies, University of Jordan. He defined corruption as “the abuse of public office and power for private gains”. He argued that it is the unhealthy



relationships between public institutions and their officials that constitute opportunities for the proliferation of corruption. He examined the effects of corruption on economic development of Africa and the Arab world making the following salient points:

-Corruption negatively impacts development, as it results in the depletion of resources, the emergence of irregularities and defects in the key structures targeted by development. It also reduces economic growth and hampers development efforts.

-It leads to unfair distribution of natural resources, which are diverted towards corrupt transactions, or get leaked, into private accounts, given the poor performance of oversight bodies and lack of accountability. As such, the state would be unable to undertake service projects based on set priorities.

-It negatively affects the quality of transactions and contracts, as contractors usually provide poor quality materials due to collusive practices.

-Graft negatively affects investment milieus

-It affects the integrity of competitive ambiance as well as the efficiency which is a basic standard for market survival.

-Corruption conspicuously affects the sovereignty of the state. With the proliferation of corruption, economy would go bust, with the state becoming unable to manage same or meet the requirements of development.

He concluded that Africans and Arabs are aspiring for serious reforms that reflect positively on the quality of life as well as socio-economic, political and cultural aspects of life.

We are hopeful that such aspirations will be realized if the scourges of corruption, depredation, dependency and neo-colonialism are entirely surmounted, something that hinges on the political will of leaders and decision-makers.

The second paper of the day was titled "Lessons that can be learnt from prevailing conflict and the way out: The cases of Syria, Mali, Central Africa Republic, Egypt, Iraq". Presented by Dr. Sami Al- Khawaldah, from Amman, Jordan. In his introduction, he said that Conflicts are raging here and there. There are Fighting and killings as well as regimes and groups –both Shiite and



Sunni. Muslims are killing Christians, and Christians killing Muslims. All these are taking place, at times, in the name of religion and/or persuasion, and in the name of nationalism etc. They also occur under jihadist mottos and patriotic calls. The result is martyrs from all parties; all going to the paradise that allegedly waits them.

He cited the Arab spring in early 2011, in which some Arab countries revolted against their regimes to get rid of injustice, thus triggering the rising up of nations and others wanted to revolt. This gave rise to organization, individuals and figures that attempted to reap the fruits of such revolutions. These groups also fuelled such conflicts, using sects, organizations and aid requests as a smokescreen. Consequently, international conflicts have become of religious, sectarian, ideological nature, conflicts among groups all bearing arms, fighting one another, and receiving weapons and funds in order for killings, displacement and destruction to sustain.

He proffered some Solutions to conflicts which include the following:

1. Avoiding ideological differences. 2. Shunning violence, laying down arms and coming to the negotiating table. 3. Upholding common destiny.
4. Formulating a strategically political resistance project with socio-economic, political and cultural dimensions in order to put an end to dependency.
5. Setting up national liberation movements in such countries based on peacefulness and real democratic channels. 6. Liberating resources.
7. Liberating the political will from foreign predominance. 8. Laying down genuine national development plans. 9. Enhancing Islamic integration and re-embracing the divine mission, as Quran was sent down in Arabic. Indeed, No Arabism without Islam and vice versa. 10. Arabs, including Muslims and Christians, should unite ranks in the face of colonial powers. 11. Putting a stop to some regional powers' intervention into Arab countries' affairs.

The second day of the meeting started at 09:30 with presentation of paper three which was on the topic “**Economic integration: The situation in Middle East and African countries**” by **Dr. Ma’an Alnasour**. He defined economic integration as a process that is usually linked to productive efficiency by jointly harnessing human and material resources within an economic region. It is a persistent socio-economic and political process meant to establish proportionate integrative relationships by means of creating mutual economic interests and



earning joint revenues through increased amalgamation among its socio-economic structures.

He further stated that the success of economic integration entails meeting a set of important conditions such as:

1. Geographical proximity, which is extremely important for the success of economic integration.
2. Political will is necessary for fulfilling obligations that ultimately result in achieving economic integration.
3. Any country willing to join an economic grouping must have either a deficit or surplus in its economy, providing that integrated countries proportionately compensate the deficit and dispose of the surplus.
4. Homogeneity of integrated economies, meaning that integration should take place among homogenous and identical structures in such a way that prevents economic differences and/or the dominance of an economy over the other.
5. Availability of telecommunications and transport means in the integrated countries.
6. Proportionality of social and cultural values because economies with proportional, uniform values and systems are able to easily attain economic integration.
7. Coordination of national economic policies and the conditions permitting manufacturers to produce goods and services under natural circumstances.

Recommendations & Resolutions:

1-Participants emphasize that corruption is a serious blight that hinders development, progress, justice and law enforcement in any country, thus giving rise to social disorders, extremism, hatred and subversion.

2-They further assert that parliaments should combat graft by encouraging the enactment of laws and regulations in such a way as to preserve the rights of both state and society, and fight the pilfering of public funds.

3-They underscore that the strengthening of oversight bodies is one of the key instruments of fighting corruption including those belonging to parliaments and juridical bodies. Also, parliaments should adopt the principle of transparency in terms of revealing major corruption cases and encouraging the press and public opinion bodies to engage in public oversight with an aim to fight corruption.

4-Delegates also underline that good governance must be respected and reflected into the behaviours of administrative heads of different government institutions.



5-Delegates confirm that the spread of poverty, unemployment, injustice and underdevelopment is a key reasons for conflicts and wars.

6-They stress the importance of the role being played by youth in shaping up the future for their nations , and recommend that ASSECAA's General Secretariat should allocate time during its next meetings for the discussion of youth's and women's issues as well as their role in driving economic growth and achieving development in their own nations.

7-They affirm that dialogue is the only means of tackling internal disputes and preventing regional and international interventions.

8-The strengthening of the culture of accepting the other, and recognizing other entities and components would go a long way towards preventing conflicts that cause destructive confrontations and wars.

9-political will is a precondition for finding solutions acceptable to all rivals, a prerequisite for the success of conflict resolution efforts, as well as the avoidance of all sectarian conflicts.

9-Particiapnts recognize that procrastination on addressing and finding just solutions to lots of issues has generated frustration and despondence that immensely contributed to the spread of extremism and terrorism. Therefore, delegates call for the international community to effectively engage in finding fair solutions to the Palestinian question, and for Israel to comply with the international resolutions to the effect.

11-Delegates stress the need for forging an Afro-Arab economic grouping that meets the aspiration of Arabs and Africans for the achievement of socio-economic growth by properly harnessing the abundant natural resources available in Africa and Arab world. They encourage any efforts at the realization of such an end goal by means of bilateral or regional agreements, among others.

12-12-The Association's sixth retreat supports the Sudanese and Zimbabwean delegations' demand for lifting the economic sanctions imposed on its country, and urging the United Nations to do so soonest.

13-Particpatns support Bahrain's proposal on the establishment of a committee on human rights within the Association, as the topic has become so relevant to the various aspects of contemporary life. Consequently, Bahrain has



volunteered to prepare the panel's terms of reference as well as the scope of its responsibilities. Participants agreed in principle to the proposal, and expressed their appreciation to the Kingdom of Bahrain for the submission thereof. Accordingly, they instructed the General Secretariat to follow up the matter with Bahrain and then table the final results in this respect to ASSECAA's next meeting.

14-Delegates finally express their immense gratitude and profound appreciation to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for their humanitarian stance regarding the hosting of Syrian refugees, urging the international community to provide aid to Jordan to enable it meet the requirements of such humanitarian initiative. They also express their sincere gratitude to the king, government and people of Jordan, as well as the House of dignitaries, represented by its Speaker H.E Abdul Rauf Al-Rawabedeh for hosting such an august meeting, and for the substantive efforts they have exerted to make the event a great success.

ASSECAA General Secretariat

Amman, Kingdom of Jordan

25th September, 2014

