



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MEMO

Tunis, 9 July 2012

Further concrete support for transformation in Tunisia

Remarks by Commissioner Štefan Füle at the press point during his visit to Tunisia:

"Happy to be back here, for the third time since your revolution.

Today I came to discuss how the EU can support your transition and to deliver concrete results.

Europe remains impressed by the Tunisian revolution, it was historic and we want you to succeed in achieving the aims of the revolution.

What it means in terms what we do: to facilitate the economic development and to provide further support for your reforms and transformation - which define the historic changes initialled by the people for the people.

Success of the transition is however in your own hands and will require continuing the political and economic reforms.

We had very good discussion today with the Prime minister and some ministers not only about how the EU could support the transition but also about what is the concrete assistance we are delivering already.

I have signed two Financing Agreements: a €20 million programme designed to improve the competitiveness of the services sector, the other, for €7 million to boost the role of civil society in Tunisia. This is a concrete contribution to the transformation process.

When I came last year, we promised to increase funding for Tunisia by €150 million over three years. And in fact we will have already committed these funds by the end of this year. So there is potential for more. Our funding will be spent on support to poor regions, access to health care, renovation of popular neighbourhood, to name only a few examples.

Tunisia is already the largest beneficiary of the SPRING programme. If reforms continue, we will mobilise additional support. It is through cooperation with Tunisia that we turn the principle "more for more" into practical instrument for transformation of autocratic regime to democracy.

Our agenda goes well beyond money. We want to have a whole range of new agreements that will help Tunisia to prosper and create jobs and economic opportunities:

First: we are working on a new "Privileged Partnership" and negotiating a new Action Programme.

Second, I have just proposed re-launch negotiations on a number of trade agreements, notably those for agricultural products, investments and services. These will open the door to the vast EU market for Tunisian agricultural products, and facilitate EU investments in Tunisia.

Third: we understand the importance of tourism for Tunisia and we are proposing a new agreement in the aviation area which will boost tourism and business.

Fourth, we are proposing a mobility partnership that will facilitate the exchange of people between Tunisia and the EU.

Finally, we are keen to intensifying the political dialogue on freedoms, democracy and reforms. I discussed with my counterparts fundamental freedoms, democratic values and reforms, because it is important that the ideals of the Revolution – social justice, respect for personal dignity and freedoms, can be achieved. Here the EU can share its own diverse experience of managing transition processes. And there were many examples, including my own country the former Czechoslovakia.

I also discussed developments in the wider region, including recent elections in Libya and Maghreb integration, for which we share very similar views.

We respect the Tunisian people. We see you as a valued neighbour. You are facing many challenges in the transformation, but you are not alone. Your success will be an example for the region and the World."