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ESCWA	TUNISIA COUNTRY BRIEF

Participatory Development and Social Justice | SDD

I. SUMMARY: A PROMISING YET TURBULENT TRANSITION

Tunisia, the birthplace of the Arab uprisings, has undergone a number of profound and promising changes as it enters its third year of transition. A relatively small territory, a relatively homogenous population despite tribal and ethnic divisions in some areas, a sizable and well-educated middle class, a long history of encouraging women's rights, and a diversified and liberalized economy are all elements of support to this transition. The first successful milestone of the transition was the transparent and peaceful election of a National Constituent Assembly (NCA) on October 23, 2011, forming the newest interim government led by the Islamist Ennahda party. A government was established in partnership with the two other key secular political parties in the country.

In the period that followed, political uncertainty has rendered decision making difficult while the deteriorating security situation has tarnished the image of the country. Consensus has been difficult to achieve as the country has witnessed a series of political and socioeconomic upheavals not least of which was the assassination of two key opposition figures and member of the NCA in 2013 Chokri Belaid and Mhamed Brahmi in February 2013 and August 2013 respectively. Following the assassination of Brahmi, demands for the resignation of the interim coalition government lead by the Islamist Ennhada party have increased while the NCA was suspended for six weeks following the withdrawal of 60-70 opposition members of parliament. More recently violent clashes have erupted in different parts of the country while the recent ambush of eight soldiers trailing al-Qaida linked radical Islamists in the mountains along the Algerian border, the biggest single loss of life for Tunisia's military since independence, shocked the country. However, and all things considered, as a result of the apparent willingness to compromise by its main political parties, Tunisia is still widely viewed as the country most likely to achieve a democratic transition.

II. MULTIPLE CHALLENGES LIMITED TOOLS: POLITICAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES

Decades of authoritarian rule followed by the current political turmoil, growing budget deficits, increasing regional inequities and socio-economic discontent has left Tunis with a host of profound challenges as it transitions to democracy. These include:

ENSURING AN INCLUSIVE TRANSITION: A POLITICAL ROADMAP AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The political transition in Tunisia has been a relatively inclusive process though a tripartite agreement between the Islamic Ennahda party, the Congrès pour la République (Congress for the Republic) and Ettakatol. In the meantime Nida Tounes, led by the last Prime Minister under Ben Ali, Béji Caid Essebsi is growing in popularity.

Under the Ben Ali regime, Tunisia had only nine legal political parties and a handful of active and independent Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). The transitional period has seen enlivened political participation through the proliferation of political and civil society actors; 110 parties took part in the Constituent Assembly elections in 2011,[1] a more open media is consistently monitoring government actions, while civil society organizations, particularly the General Tunisian Workers Union (UGTT), along with the Employers' Association, the Human Rights League and the bar association, are playing a central role in ensuring dialogue and consensus building. Thanks to their intervention, a new political roadmap has been drawn for the country to pull out of the political deadlock following the political upheavals that

[1] "Tunisia Country Note," *African Economic Outlook*, 2012, http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/north-africa/tunisia/.

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ensued in the wake of Brahmi's assassination. The Brahmi assassination prompted massive outpouring of protests against the Ennahda-led government, caused the suspension of the NAC and brought a budding political reform process to a halt. Prior to its suspension, the NAC had issued in June the third constitutional draft for public consultation and was getting ready to issue a new electoral law in preparations for the elections that were meant to take place in the third quarter of 2013.

The road map proposed by the UGTT and its partners calls for the current government to step down within three weeks of the commencement of formal talks between the different parties, the appointment of a politically neutral cabinet of independent figures, the launching of a national dialogue, finalizing a draft constitution, a new electoral law and the holding of elections in 2014. It also stipulates that the NCA approve the new cabinet within three weeks of its announcement, and the timetable for both the new constitution and elections within four weeks. Most political parties have agreed to participate in the process despite the high levels of mistrust between all parties and the complexity of issues under consideration. The reconvening of the NCA on September 17th will probably allow work on the constitution to resume and a timetable for its completion to be agreed upon.

RESTORING SECURITY AND STABILITY AND REFORMING INSTITUTIONS

Progress in security sector reform has been slow. The security and intelligence services are overseen by the Interior Ministry and are highly unpopular with the public. As such, security sector reform will require a fundamental shift and role reversal of the security forces from protector of the regime to protector of the people. So far, reform has extended beyond the Interior Ministry to the prisons by the creation of the National Authority for the Prevention of Torture. Little information has been made public regarding the security apparatus's internal structure or staffing, however it is clear that internal divisions have resulted in institutional deadlock as the security forces have withdrawn from many of their responsibilities.

Border porosity and insecurity has also been another major challenge for Tunisia amid reports of increased regional weapons trafficking linked to the collapse of Gaddafi's regime in neighboring Libya and subsequently to the situation in Mali. Such a circulation of firearms and explosives requires a response at the regional rather than national level with close cooperation between Tripoli, Algiers and Tunis.[2] Moreover, the violence repression of Libya's uprising and the conflict that ensued triggered a mass flow of nearly one million people into Tunisia, more than 660,000 Libyans and over 200,000 third-country nationals.[3] Tunisia opened its borders and mounted a relief effort in coordination with UN Refugee Agency and other partners.

Judicial reforms are another key area of interest. Apart from the dismissal of corrupt magistrates, little has been done other than adopting a system for vetting corrupt judges. The judicial system however is unable to meet mounting demands. Leading the calls for reform is the Association of Tunisian Magistrates (ATM), advocating for the Supreme Judicial Council that operated under Ben Ali to be replaced by a Provisional Judicial Surveillance Committee and for more involvement of magistrates and judges in the reform process.[4]

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[2] International Crisis Group, Feb 2013, Tunisia: Violence and the Salafi Challenge, Available on http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/tunisia/137-tunisia-violence-and-the-salafi-challenge.aspx, accessed October 31, 2013.
[3] "UNHCR country operations profile – Tunisia," *UN High Commissioner for Refugees,* 2012, http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486166.html.
[4] "Tunisian Transition: Hope in Spite of the Challenges," *Directorate-General for External Policies, European Parliament Policy Department*, June 2012, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/fi/studiesdownload.html?languageDocument=EN&file=75289, Accessed October 30, 2013

ECONOMIC RECOVERY, VULNERABILITY AND PROSPERITY

Economic grievances, particularly in the interior region were a key trigger in the uprising. These have been further aggravated by the economic slowdown due to ongoing political instability that has impacted foreign direct investment, tourism, remittances from migrant workers, and trade with the EU.[5] Industrial activity declined by 11%, investments by 36%, and tourism by 45%.[6] The cumulative result was the contraction of the economy: real GDP growth fell from 3% in 2010 to -2.0% in 2011. The Tunisian economy improved in 2012 as GDP growth increased to 3.6% in 2012 due to recovery in the agricultural, tourism and the mineral sectors.[7] However, economic recovery slowed down again in 2013 due to security concerns and the ongoing recession in the European Union, Tunisia's main trading partner. A turnaround is expected for 2014 with improved domestic demand and the anticipated European Union recovery which will contribute to raising GDP growth to around 5 percent.[8]

Fiscal deficits also rose sharply between 2011 and 2012 as a result of increased public spending –namely on wages and subsidies- in response to the popular discontent and weak economic performance and grew from about 1% of GDP in 2010 to 6.3% of GDP in 2012[9] with the forecasts of around 7.5% of GDP for this year.[10] Economic analysts predict the deficit to remain wide through 2013 and 2014 as welfare spending and capital expenditure increase. These include the recapitalization of state owned banks with around US$0.9bn as well as a rising public-sector wage bill, inflated this year by the addition of 16,000 new posts as well as expansive wage rises authorized in 2012. They also include the high levels of food and fuel subsidies that will cost the government this year around 20% of its budget.[11]

Inflation also increased during this period, from an average 3.5% in 2011,[12] to 6.5% in March 2013. This increase was mainly driven by high food and oil prices as well as the strong depreciation of the Tunisian Dinar[13]. In June 2012, the value of the Tunisian dinar (TD) hit a five-year low as a result of a host of external and internal factors. Since 80% of Tunisia's commercial transactions are conducted with Europe, the decreasing strength of the euro relative to the dollar led to a correlative drop in the dinar's value. Domestically, an underperforming economy meant an increasing budget deficit driving inflation to unprecedented heights and resulting in cheaper export costs and higher import costs. Since Tunisia primarily exports raw good as opposed to high end products, cheap export costs have not been unbeneficial to Tunisians. However, expensive imports have had an adverse effect, decreasing household purchasing power and leading to increased poverty and vulnerability.

Combined, the regression in financial and economic outputs has had a considerable impact on Tunisian citizens. Figures released in 2012, showed that poverty rates were much higher prior to the uprising than previously disclosed, reaching 11.8% as opposed to the of 3.5% reported as the official national poverty rate at the time. Today, around a quarter of the population live on less than USD 2 per day.[14]

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[5] "Tunisia Overview," *The World Bank*, http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/overview.
[6] "Tunisian Transition: Hope in Spite of the Challenges, ibid.
[7] "Tunisia Country Report", *Economic Intelligence Unit*. October 2013. Available from http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1041074288&Country=Tunisia&topic=Economy&subtopic=Charts+and+tables&subsubtopic=Annual+data+and+forecast, October 2013
[8] "Tunisia Overview", *The World Bank*, available from http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/overview. Updated September 2013.
[9] Masetti, O., Komer, K., Forster, M., & Friedman, J. (2013). Two years after the Arab Spring: Where are we now? What next?. *DB Research*. 25
[10] EIU, (28 October, 2013) Trying to Tame the Subsidy Bill, Available on http://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=351113419&Country=Tunisia&topic=Economy, Accessed October 31, 2013
[11] ibid
[12] "Tunisia Country Report," *Economic Intelligence Unit*, July 2012, http://www.eiu.com/report_dl.asp?issue_id=499054834&mode=pdf.
[13] "Tunisia Overview", *The World Bank*, available from http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/overview. Updated September 2013.
[14] "Tunisian Transition: Hope in Spite of the Challenges, ibid.

Furthermore, a regional breakdown, published for the first time in 2011, reveals that the national average masked large disparities, with poverty rates as low as 5-7 % in the Center-east and Grand Tunis region and as high as 29% in the Center-west of the country. The problem of regional disparities has fueled social unrest in the cities of Sidi Bouzid, Kasserine and Thala in the central region of the country due to decades of neglect and underdevelopment while coastal areas received 65% of public investment[15]. While the fuel and food subsidies are meant to mitigate these conditions, their untargeted nature has mean that the non-poor have benefitted much more than the poor.

Despite these challenges Tunisia's economic recovery is promising due to its diversified economy with important agricultural, mining (particularly phosphate), tourism, and manufacturing sectors and a skilled workforce. In response, to its economic challenges, politicians are advocating state-led efforts to reduce economic and regional equality. For example, the government is pursuing fiscally expansive policies in order to boost skyrocketing levels of unemployment and has appealed for external financial support in the short-term.[16] In pursuing such policies the government will need to balance between short term benefits and long term prospects for equitable development and inclusive growth.

Social Unrest, Unemployment and Social Rights

Social unrest is also mounting as a result of fragmented and inadequate social protection schemes as well as continually rising unemployment. Despite significant spending on social support, social protection programs for the most vulnerable tend to be inadequately targeted, covering only 4.5% on the population and excluding many of the poor. Targeting criteria is vague and prevents many needy families from participating. In the past, many non-poor individuals have taken advantage of lax administrative procedures through their political allegiance to benefit from such programming. Moreover, these and similar development initiatives have proved to be quite unsuccessful in integrating the poor into the labor market, leaving vulnerable groups dependent on the state for assistance.[17]

Workers' strikes demanding permanent jobs or wage increases are an increasingly common occurrence, as is the blockading of workplaces by the unemployed.[18] Prior to the uprisings, overall unemployment was estimated at 13%[19], rising to 18.9 % in 2011[20] then receding to 16.7% in 2012[21] The demographic most affected by unemployment remains young university graduates (15-29 years old), whose rates of unemployment stood at 44% in 2012.[22] Unemployment is highest in interior regions, such as Kasserine and Gafsa, which were the epicenters of the revolution and continue to stage protests over perceived government neglect.[23] In response to rising unemployment, the interim government launched an emergency program in 2011 called Amal, which provides a monthly allowance of TD 150, health insurance, and reduced fares on public transport for part-time work in the civil service. Additionally, the

[15] "Tunisia: Interim Country Strategy Paper", *African Development Bank*, February 2012. Available from: http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Project-and-Operations/Catalogue%20Interim%20strategy%20Paper%20Anglais_Mise%20en%20page%201.pdf Accessed October 31, 2013.
[16] Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia," *Congressional Research Service, US Congress,* June 2012, available on http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21666.pdf, accessed October 31, 2013
[17] "Tunisia Country Note," *African Economic Outlook*, 2012, http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/north-africa/tunisia/.
[18] "Tunisia Country Note," *African Economic Outlook*, 2012, http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/north-africa/tunisia/.
[19] "Tunisia Overview," *The World Bank*, http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/overview. April 2012
[20] "Tunisia Country Note," *African Economic Outlook*, 2012, http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/north-africa/tunisia/.
[21] Tunisia Overview," *The World Bank*, http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/overview. April 2013.
[22] "Tunisia Overview," *The World Bank*, http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/overview. April 2012.
[23] "The Revolution in Tunisia: Economic Challenges and Prospects," *African Development Bank*, March 2011, http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/North%20Africa%20Quaterly%20Analytical%20Anglais%20ok_North%20Africa%20Quaterly%20Analytical.pdf.

ADVANCE UNEDITED VERSION

government has initiated a permanent-job creation scheme to recruit 24,000 people into the civil service, and 10,000 into semi-state bodies. The success of these costly programs has yet to be determined. Taking a holistic approach, educational reform should be considered, as it currently fails to adequately deliver qualifications needed by the labor market. Additionally, Tunisia's low wage, low value added economy continues to lack the capacity of absorbing skilled workers. Without efforts to address rising poverty and unemployment, particularly in central Tunisia, the frustrations and sense of exclusion that fueled the revolution risk to once again threaten social stability.

AID EFFECTIVENESS AND THE RECUPERATION OF ASSETS

Prior to the uprising, official development assistance (ODA) to Tunisia increased from USD 375 million in 2008 to USD 551million in 2010. The largest share of donations flowed into the economic infrastructure and services sector. Following the uprisings, Tunisia received substantial financial support from the international community. A EUR one billion economic recovery support program, in support of economic reforms has been put in place by the government to reinforce the process of economic and political transition.[24] Moreover, the French government has independently agreed to release EUR 350 million worth of loans for 2011-2012 through the French Development Agency.[25] Despite the increased aid and many other pledges for financial support, follow-up and delivery has been slow.[26]

The recovery of stolen assets has also been a major challenge for Tunisia as in other Arab Spring countries. Ben Ali is accused of having laundered wealth from some of the country's biggest companies in which control and shares were often obtained by political pressure or corruption. In early 2011, authorities seized shares of domestic companies controlled by Ben Ali and his entourage in every major economic sector.[27] Tunisian authorities have identified at least 12 countries where stolen money was stashed, totaling billions of dollars.[28] The recovery process has begun, with Lebanon returning about USD 29 million in assets belonging to Ben Ali's wife[29], and Switzerland identifying and freezing USD 63 million in secret accounts belonging to the ex-President.[30] In September 2013, a report on recent efforts to confiscate illicit assets in properties and companies from individuals tied with the former regime was presented by the Confiscation Commission[31].

DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS AND JUSTICE

Tunisians have thus far opted for a reconciliatory approach to transitional justice. Moral and material compensation is being sought and demonstrations are being held calling for the trial of senior former regime officials, particularly in the security sector. The victims and their families are joined by a range of civil society actors, including journalists, union leaders, and human rights activists who are fearful of potential impunity that may be granted to their former abusers, particularly in light of the slow reform

ADVANCE UNEDITED VERSION

[24] It includes an EU grant, a World Bank Loan, an African Development Bank Loan and a loan from the French Agency for Development
[25] Farah Samti, "Tunisian Foreign Affairs: France Shifts Positions, Ennahda Copes," *Tunisia Live*, November 2011, http://www.tunisia-live.net/2011/11/13/tunisian-foreign-affairs-france-shifts-positions-ennahda-copes/.
[26] "Tunisia in Transition: What Role for the International Community?" *Project on Middle East Democracy,* July 2012, http://pomed.org/blog/2012/07/pomed-notes-tunisia-in-transition-what-role-for-the-international-community.html/.
[27] Alexis Arieff, "Political Transition in Tunisia," *ibid*
[28] Deborah Ball et al., "Arab Spring Regimes Face Long Slog to Recoup Assets," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 2011, http://online.wsj.com/article/SB20001424053111904875404576528310932368624.html.
[29] "Tunisia's Cash-back: The start of more to come". *Stolen Assets and Recoverty Initiative,* 12 April 2013. Available from: http://star.worldbank.org/star/news/tunisia%E2%80%99s-cash-back
[30] Lin Noueihed, "Tunisia's (Ex-President) Ben Ali to Give Up Swiss-based Assets: Lawyer," *Reuters News Agency,* July 2012, http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/16/us-tunisia-benali-assets.
[31] See more at: http://www.tunisia-live.net/2013/09/19/government-accused-of-incompetence-in-recovering-ben-ali-assets/

of the security sector and judiciary.[32] At the same time, Tunisia has made other inroads in transitional justice by ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and several other conventions on the Fight against Torture and Crimes against Humanity in August 2011[33], and more recently, trying Ben Ali and his associates in the Tunis Military Court, where Ben Ali received 20 years jail in absentia.

However, the politicization of justice in post uprising Tunisia has slowed down the process of transitional justice. On the one hand, a proposed law on the "immunization of the revolution" could be used to for the purposes of political exclusion that would effectively derail the transition process. On the other hand, transitional justice initiatives have to date appeared slow and piecemeal, comprising of several separate, uncoordinated institutions: the newly established Human Rights and Transitional Justice Ministry; a number of independent commissions against corruption and abuse such as the Commission of Inquiry into Human Rights Violations during the Revolution and the National Fact-Finding Commission on Embezzlement and Corruption; civil justice and military justice bodies; as well as scattered civil society initiatives.[34] Several civil society and victims' organizations have been particularly active in developing strategies to deal with past abuses and have submitted proposals for review by the Minister of Human Rights and Transitional Justice and the NCA. While this is a good start, what is currently missing is a shared, cohesive national strategy for transitional justice.[35] At the same time, the draft law on transitional justice drawn up by the Technical Commission comprising of mainly of civil society representatives of diverse political backgrounds and two employees of the Ministry of Transitional Justice has now been shelved for more than eight months. One of the key elements of this draft law is the establishment of a "Truth and Dignity Commission" that would create a reparations fund for victims. Equally important is its regional inequities by allowing for the designation of entire regions as designated as "victims" and this eligible for special development support.

RELIGION, STATE, AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Historically a secular nation, comprising of a mostly Muslim Sunni population, Tunisia is witnessing the re-entry of religiously oriented political parties into public life particularly En-Nahda the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood. The emergence of political Islam as a force to be reckoned with has caused friction with more secular political parties and societal grouping particularly given the recent licensing of the more conservative Salafist party, Jabhat al-Islah in March 2012. Leftist and secular parties have expressed concerns that these parties are presenting an external front focused on a discourse of tolerance while gradually introducing restrictive laws and institutions within the country. The ruling Ennahda party has denied such claims.

Tunisia is among the most advanced countries in Africa in terms of gender equality and there is concern that the advent of conservative political parties may seek to erode the rights and protections currently afforded to women. The country has a record of providing protection for women's rights and granting them equal access to education and healthcare. Since 1999, female university enrolment has exceeded male enrolment. So far, the government has done little to fuel the concerns of women's right advocates. In fact, in 2011, Tunisia proceeded to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

[32] "Tunisia: Combating Impunity, Restoring Security," *International Crisis Group*, May 2012, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/tunisia/123-tunisia-combatting-impunity-restoring-security.aspx.
[33] "Tunisia: 'Govt Will Never Give Up Requests to Extradite Former Regime's Vestiges,' Says Samir Dilou," *Tunis Afrique Press,* July 2012, http://allafrica.com/stories/201207031026.html.
[34] "Tunisia: Combating Impunity, Restoring Security," *International Crisis Group*, May 2012, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/north-africa/tunisia/123-tunisia-combatting-impunity-restoring-security.aspx.
[35] "Tunisia Leads the Way in Transitional Justice," *International Center for Transitional Justice,* April 2012, http://www.ictj.org/news/tunisia-leads-way-transitional-justice.

ADVANCE UNEDITED VERSION

Discrimination Against Women.[36] On the political front, article 16 (parity) of the new electoral law calls on all political parties to submit an equal number of female and male candidates in all electoral lists and stipulates the alternation in candidates (female and male) in the way they are ranked on lists. In the most recent elections women maintained their pre-revolution status and won 57 of the 216 seats or around 27% of the Tunisian parliament.[37]

CIVIL SOCIETY AND PARTICIPATORY POLITICS

Despite Ben Ali's attempts to suppress civil society, the foundations of a vibrant civil society were apparent prior to the 2011 uprising.[38] In the year following the revolution an estimated 2,000 new CSOs were founded.[39] Civil society played a major role in mobilizing the population during the revolution and has demonstrated considerable political clout so far in the transition. As early as February 2011, various CSOs, including the UGTT, have been included in the committee in charge of drafting and approving the electoral law for the Constitutional Assembly.[40] The more recent mediation efforts of the quartet to break the gridlock between the different political parties and its proposals of a clear road map for the necessary upcoming milestones to reset the democratic transition on course were accepted by the various political parties. Demonstrations continued until the time of writing this country brief, demanding that the government resignation and the implementation of the roadmap not be delayed.

Particular attention has also been paid to the importance of an emerging independent and uncensored media in post-revolution Tunisia. A new Press Code and a law on press freedom and protection of sources drafted a mere three months after the revolution highlights the efforts undertaken within media reform. With 230 new print publications, six new television channels and 12 new radio stations since January 2011, it is apparent that the Tunisian media has become more pluralistic in spite of archaic legislation –such as contended Article 121(3) of the criminal code which prohibits the distribution of publications that may "harm public order" – that continue to restrict freedom of expression.[41]

III. TOWARDS A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

The Tunisian transition is strides ahead of its Arab counterparts: the established political structures and processes are successfully weathering the transitional storm; preliminary reforms to produce functional and transparent institutions are underway; an inclusive process for drafting the constitution is proceeding despite delays; the economy is showing some preliminary signs of recovery; and civil society – including a free and independent media and a strong trade union – is growing stronger by the day. The government has demonstrated a willingness for an inclusive transition, and has shown signs of addressing the needs of the people by introducing programs such as healthcare for all unemployed graduates, large subsidies for basic foods, and permanent post appointments (a central demand of trade unions).[42] The government has vowed to raise growth to 8% and reduce unemployment from 19% to

[36] "Tunisia Country Note," *African Economic Outlook*, 2012, http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/north-africa/tunisia/.
[37] Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2013.
[38] "Political Transition in Tunisia," *Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly,* June 2012, http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewHTML.asp?FileId=18736&Language=EN#_TOC_N086F6330N0F3DC550.
[39] "Supporting the Development of Civil Society in Tunisia," *UN Development Programme*, April 2012, http://www.gaportal.org/news/detail/supporting-the-development-of-civil-society-in-tunisia.
[40] "Tunisia: Changes and Challenges of Political Transition, Technical Report No. 3," *MedPro*, May 2011. www.iai.it/pdf/mediterraneo/MedPro/MedPro-technical-paper_03.pdf.
[41] "Tunisian Transition: Hope in Spite of the Challenges," *Directorate-General for External Policies, European Parliament Policy Department*, June 2012, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/fi/studiesdownload.html?languageDocument=EN&file=75289.
[42] "Tunisia in Transition: What Role for the International Community?" *Project on Middle East Democracy,* July 2012, http://pomed.org/blog/2012/07/pomed-notes-tunisia-in-transition-what-role-for-the-international-community.html/.

ADVANCE UNEDITED VERSION

8.5% by 2016.[43] However, in the absence of new economic initiatives, such needed measures will also drive the fiscal deficit toward further increases.

Nevertheless, Tunisians today are demanding more from the government, and want to see signs of development in their daily lives. Significant gains must be made on this front in order to relieve growing frustrations which are being expressed through widespread protests and civil unrest. The growing frustrations of the impoverished interior as well as the tensions between secular and conservative Islamic forces are major challenges that will require careful navigation.

Civil society has emerged as a powerful force within post-revolutionary Tunisia and has taken a leading role in the transitional period. Its upcoming challenges will involve meaningfully engaging and influencing the constitutional drafting process and the ensuing of parliamentary elections. Although civil society has made efforts to participate with the constitutional drafting process and provide recommendations, there are no formal mechanisms for engaging citizens in this process, which could prove to be highly problematic.[44] As it embarks on a national dialogue, Tunisia needs to formalize channels for citizen participation and ensure that clear procedures are in place for citizen engagement in policy making – this would be the best way to deepen democracy and ensure a safe transition.

ADVANCE UNEDITED VERSION

[43]"Arab Spring Economies: Unfinished Business" *The Economist,* February 2012, http://www.economist.com/node/21546018.
[44]"Civil Society Needs Assessment in Tunisia," *Slovac Aid*, April 2012.
http://www.pdcs.sk/files//file/Projekty/CSO%20Needs%20Assessment%20Tunisia%20Final%20PUBLIC.pdf.