

## **The West Asia-North Africa (WANA) Social Charter Consultation**

**13 January 2011** - Regional representatives of civil society organisations, media outlets, academia and the public sector convened in Doha this week to explore the idea of a Social Charter in the West Asia - North Africa (WANA) region and Arab Democracy Foundation.

The WANA Forum is a regional initiative launched in 2009 by His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal, aimed at restoring the lost art of conversation to a region that has long endured social, political and cultural fractures and turmoil. The Forum acts as a neutral, apolitical initiative that provides a platform for actors to voice their concerns and to identify the region's long-term opportunities and threats. The WANA Forum Community is composed of civil society actors, public and private sector leaders, as well as academics and representatives of the media, who identified 'Social Cohesion' as a key component of peace and stability in the region.

Social Cohesion is the intangible bond that holds the members of our societies together, and as such, must be recognised as the key component to peace and stability in the region. Rooted in the notion of citizenship and belonging, the group drafted a Social Charter that will capture the fundamental rights and principles of the individual, while strengthening a regional identity that transcends narrow political borders. It recognised social cohesion and unity of purpose as the primary thread woven into our stronger social fabric. Participants discussed the importance of access and opportunity, to provide guarantees for prosperity and sustainable development, and focused on building peace and resilience in societies, and guaranteeing refuge and assistance to the uprooted. The Charter committed to seeking wisdom and knowledge, committing to the educating future generations and providing equal opportunity to aid the people of the region and furthered the notion of tolerance and understanding of diversity.

The final draft of the charter will be announced in 8-10 May at the Annual Meeting of the WANA Forum, 2011.