

**European-Arab Universities' Meeting:
Arab Democracy Foundation's initiative to launch an International
Cooperation Network on Democracy Education in the MENA region**

Notre Dame University-Louaize, 29-30 April 2010

Fr. Walid Moussa, *President*

It was a year ago when I had the pleasure of receiving Dr. Mohsen Marzouk here at Notre Dame University-Louaize to introduce to me his project of launching an International Cooperation Network on Democracy Education in the MENA region. Dr. Marzouk invited us, at NDU, to be part of this noble initiative, it was a call we couldn't but willingly and enthusiastically accept. When recently, we learned about the intention of holding this gathering at NDU, we promptly and gladly welcomed this proposition.

Today, with gratitude, I welcome all of you present here, wishing you a successful meeting.

Although I am not an expert in this field, and I am here to deliver a word of welcome, yet I would like to share with you the following three beliefs I abide by when it comes to democracy, with the understanding that they are not exhaustive remarks:

1. Democracy is born in the heart and the mind. It comes from within and never from outside. It is an inner dynamic status. It can neither be granted or given, nor be imposed. Nonetheless, the spirit of democracy cannot be established in the midst of terrorism, whether governmental or popular, however, a democratic atmosphere has its foundations in the deep souls of the individuals. Along this, Mohandas Gandhi added that "to safeguard democracy the people must have a keen sense of independence and self-respect".
2. In the absence of the aspiration for democracy, tyranny may find its way. Voltaire had put it as follows: "So long as the people do not care to exercise their freedom,

those who wish to tyrannize will do so; for tyrants are active and ardent, and will devote themselves in the name of any number of gods, religious and otherwise, to put shackles upon sleeping men". Moreover, I would add that democracy cannot be only an individual attempt, but it is definitely a collective effort.

3. Democracy is not merely being, it is rather becoming. It is not enough to have the spirit of democracy invade your whole being, but this spirit has to lead the individual into a life of democratic actions. Indeed, democracy cannot be the subject of theories, but rather it has to be translated in applications. It is practical and not theoretical. Thus, men and women are lead to think and act for themselves, and consequently they become democratic.

With the aforementioned remarks, I look at Democracy Education in the light of Socrates' principle of education that I cannot teach anybody democracy, but I can only make them think democratically and act accordingly.

To conclude, I would like to thank and welcome Prof. Florence Benoit-Rohmer, Secretary-General of the European Inter-University Center in Human Rights and Democratization, and Dr. Mohsen Marzouk, Secretary-General of the Arab Democracy Foundation. As well, my thanks and welcome to all participants and contributors to the success of this meeting. Moreover, on your behalf, I express my sincere gratitude to all those who worked hard organizing this event.

All my best wishes for a successful and fruitful meeting.