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## A STRONG SUPPORT TO THE DEMAND FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS RESPECT IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES

By Per Vinther, ALDA President

The Association of Local Democracy Agencies strongly supports the demand for democracy and respect for human rights in the Southern Mediterranean countries and condemns in particular the violence in Libya. We are strongly concerned with the fate of migrants who are fleeing the countries in danger either by sea or through long and very risky journeys over land.

We consider that this is our role, as Europeans, supporting the future strengthening of European identity to promote peace and democracy within our borders but today even more so in our Neighbourhood. The unrests and uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya show that the request for citizenship and involvement and respect in the democratic process, at the borders of Europe, is an essential need.

ALDA and the LDAs have an extensive knowledge in post conflict areas, like in Western Balkans and in Southern Caucasus to restore peace and democracy, as well as paving the way for future development. We are convinced that it is possible only through real support to local authorities and civil society working together.

ALDA recommends to the European institutions to respond with one single voice in defence of democracy and human rights in this area of the world in these days and give full support to migrants in needs. It calls for support and commitments from local authorities and their associations as well as European Civil Society to be engaged in giving support and help in this moment and in the future.

We strongly recommend the inclusion of local governance and citizens' participation as a cross cutting element of the European Neighbourhood Policies and programmes.

Being already involved in a programme for migrants in Algeria and initiatives in Morocco, ALDA confirms its interest in supporting local good governance and citizens' participation in the Southern Mediterranean countries, drawing on our experience and commitment from Europe, in particular Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership.