

## **Declaration of the Hammamet Forum**

Maghrebi newspaper editors, journalists and media experts, convened in the city of Hammamet, Tunisia, on January 23-24, 2013, consider their adoption of a code of ethics as an important step forward to enhance the credibility of the journalistic profession and provide more coherence among media stakeholders in the Maghreb region.

In addition to the publication of this code and associated mechanisms conducive to its respect, the participants in the forum also called upon the Maghrebi governments to cease the oppression and coercion of journalists in the pursuit of their profession. Further, they asked that endeavours, instead, should be focused on the creation of a friendlier environment that would foster a genuinely free and strong media in the Maghreb region. This could be made possible through the promulgation of more modern and democratic laws that insure the journalists' immunity from imprisonment. Also, and in order to allow journalists the necessary security in the, while practice of their profession, they should be granted free access to information without retaliation from political authorities.

Participants in the forum also insisted on the need for Maghrebi editors to redouble efforts to reform media institutions, to upgrade the working and living standards journalists and empower female journalists towards decision-taking positions. This whole process should operate within a sound economic environment and apply in a spirit of fair competition.

The signatories commend the efforts deployed by their Tunisian colleagues, with the assistance of the European Union in ensuring the success of the Hammamet forum. In order to implement the code of ethics and foster ethical journalism values in the Maghreb region, they agreed on the following:

First: To consider the 24<sup>th</sup> of January, of every year, as a Maghrebi day underlining the code of ethics.

Second: To hold a regular meeting for Maghrebi media stakeholders, the frequency and agenda of which will be decided by a follow-up committee to be endorsed by the participants in the Hammamet forum.

Third: To establish a Maghrebi media observatory entrusted with the follow-up of all forms of coordination, cooperation and solidarity activities and to assist the Maghrebi media sector towards their ambition of guaranteeing the right of its audience to enjoy free and fair information and meet the expectations of its readership all over the Maghreb region.