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[Press release](#) | 06.02.2011

## **Ad Hoc Delegation of the European Parliament in Tunisia**

### **Joint press release of the EP delegation**

The ad hoc delegation of the European Parliament, co-chaired by Mr José Ignacio Salafranca and Mr Pier Antonio Panzeri visited Tunisia from 3 to 6 February in order to show European Parliament's solidarity and support to the Tunisian people during this historic democratic transition. During the mission, the delegation assessed the full extent of the institutional, political, economic and social challenges that face the interim government in meeting the legitimate aspirations of the Tunisian people in matters of democratization, justice, fundamental rights, development and job creation, especially in inland areas. The ad hoc delegation was received by Prime Minister Mohammed Ghannouchi, the Foreign Minister, Ahmed Ounais, the Defence Minister, Abdelkrim Zbidi, and the Minister of Justice, Lazhar Karoui Chebbi. The meeting scheduled with the Minister of the Interior could however not take place. The delegation also met with the leaders of the major political forces. Members of the delegation welcomed the first decisions taken: general amnesty, legalization of political parties and NGOs, accession to the Statute of the International Criminal Court and to the UN Convention against Torture.

The ad hoc delegation reaffirmed the commitment of the European Parliament for the EU to mobilize all relevant instruments, including the European Neighborhood Policy, in support of the Tunisian people, of the democratic transition, of civil society actors and of the necessary reforms to foster an independent judiciary and the country's economic recovery. Parliamentarians indicated that a revision of the neighborhood policy would be necessary to address the new situation in Tunisia

Regarding the next elections, MEPs stressed the importance of creating the conditions necessary for the holding of free and transparent multiparty elections. In this regard, they welcomed the invitation of the Tunisian government to host an EU Election Observation Mission.

The independence of the judiciary, respect for fundamental rights, and freedom of the press are essential for establishing a true rule of law in Tunisia.

In meetings with the three national commissions (political reform and institutional laws, determination of corruption and embezzlement, identifying abuse committed during the previous period) Members of the delegation praised the commitment of the commission chairs to conduct their mission in a framework of continuous consultation and open dialogue with representatives of political, social and citizens organizations of the entire country.

Meetings with representatives of civil society organizations, trade unions and professional associations

(LTDH AFTD, TN, UGTT UGET, among others) allowed the ad hoc delegation to measure the strength and determination of these actors in working towards reinforcing democracy in Tunisia, while preserving the existing achievements, such as Tunisia's Code of personal status. The parliamentarians pledged to follow with great attention the measures adopted by the European Union to support the reform process underway. The ad hoc delegation of the European Parliament is composed of: José Ignacio Salafranca - Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Delegation (EPP, Spain), Mr. Pier Antonio Panzeri, Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Delegation Chairman of the Delegation of For relations with the Maghreb countries (S & D, Italy), Ms Heidi Hautala, Chair Subcommittee on Human Rights V (ERTS / EFA, Finland), Simon Busuttil (EPP, Malta), Mr. Mario MAURO (EPP, Italy), Ms Tokia SAIFI (EPP, France), Ms Inés AYALA SENDER (S & D, Spain), Ms Carmen Romero-Lopez (S & D, Spain), Mrs Marielle DE SARNEZ (ALDE, France), Mr. Metin Kazak (ALDE, Bulgaria), Ms. Helene Flautre (Greens / EFA, France), Ms Nicole Sinclair (NI, UK)

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Heidi Hautala

EP Vice-President, Member

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