

Conference Statement

Maghreb Conference on the Roles and Responsibilities of Local Municipalities in Enforcing Environmental Laws

Monday, 20 February 2006

Good Evening,

I am honored to present to you the Conference Statement on the work product of the conference organized by the Moroccan Ministry of Territory Planning, Water, and the Environment, GTZ, and INECE on "the role and responsibilities of local municipalities in enforcing environmental laws."

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All of us agree that environmental protection is, to the local municipalities that follow the democratic process, a specific field in which to invest more efforts in order to answer to the inhabitants' need to live in a clean environment. This meeting symbolizes the political will of all actors in the Maghreb region to contribute to this reality.

In the opening speech by the Moroccan Minister of Territory Planning, Water, and the Environment, Minister Mohamed ELYAZGHI mentioned that the role of municipalities has been augmented in modern countries because of the direct relationship between elected official and constituents of their municipalities, and also because of being on the frontlines of tackling local issues.

Professor Mahjoub Elhaiba, Secretary General, Human Rights Constitutional Council, Morocco, also emphasized that it is important not to ignore the specificities of local municipalities during the debate so that we can take into consideration the legal and institutional aspects of municipalities in managing the environment. He categorized municipalities into three groups: forest municipalities; industrial municipalities; and urban municipalities.

Participants learned from the presentations of the experiences of the Northern countries that local municipalities play a crucial role in enforcing environmental laws, especially in terms of access to information, and other mechanisms in place that allow negotiation, or adopting programs. Mr. Camille Durant, Mayor of Nantes, France, illustrated his city's experience, while Mr. Nick Fredericks presented Amsterdam's leadership concerning environmental protection. As for Professor Durwood Zaelke, he demonstrated the important role local government plays in the United States of America.

The same role could be played by local municipalities in the Maghreb region, which was recognized in the presentations of Mr. Samir Kaabi, National Environmental Protection Agency, Tunisia; Mr. Mohamed Lemine, Ministry of Environment and Rural

Development, Mauritania; and Ms. Najat Zarouk, Ministry of the Interior, Morocco. Each one of them demonstrated the administrative mechanisms and legal tools that could be used by local municipalities in the Maghreb to ensure environmental good governance.

The meeting was also an opportunity for the audience and elected officials to debate, discuss, ask questions, and give suggestions, demonstrating that the Maghreb citizen, as an important element of governance, seeks environmental good governance that protects environmental heritage.

Peace up on you,

Ms. Hasna Kejji
Law Professor