UNOG AND THE GENEVA CENTRE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF
ARMS FORCES CO-CHAIR SPECIAL DISCUSSION ON ARAB SPRING AND
SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

We need to nurture a culture of transparency and end impunity for violence committed against
the citizenry by the security institutions in the Arab World if we are to achieve a lasting transition
to democracy and prosperity in the region. This was one of the key messages of a high-level
discussion on the role of security sector reform in the transitions in the Middle East.

Over 180 representatives of Governments, the United Nations family, think tanks, academia and
civil society took part in the special discussion, convened on 21 November 2012 by the United
Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed
Forces (DCAF), to examine progress and options for security sector reform in the aftermath of
the Arab Spring.

Mr. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Director-General of UNOG, stressed that despite some setbacks,
the Arab Spring had generated an irreversible historical process. The Director-General called for
the establishment of a consensual institutional framework to follow the popular demands for
democracy, dignity and sustainable economic prospects for the societies of the Middle East.
Reiterated the need for the consolidation of democratic institutions and a human rights culture, he
cautions that unfilled expectations could fuel greater instability and crisis.

Dr. Theodor Winkler, Director of DCAF, underlined the importance of locally-driven security
sector reform for countries undergoing democratic transition in North Africa. He also highlighted
numerous bilateral and multilateral arrangements that DCAF has concluded with key countries in
the region as well as the donor community. A particular mention was made of the recently
established special DCAF Trust Fund for Security Sector Development Assistance in North
Africa.

In his keynote address, H.E. Mr. Ali Laarayedh, Minister of the Interior of Tunisia, emphasized
the importance of striking the right balance between post-revolutionary freedom on one hand, and
combating violence, ensuring security of citizens and respect for human rights on the other. He
underlined the pivotal importance of economic recovery, constitutional reform and effective
international cooperation to ensure a democratic transition in Tunisia. He underscored the need to
strengthen the culture of transparency and accountability at the political level and advance
institutional dialogue with the citizenry as key challenges. As long as the police, military and
security services were not properly resourced and trusted the transition to democracy will be
incomplete, he said.

During the discussions, the continued impunity for perpetrators of violence against the population
by the security institutions was identified as a key obstacle to eliminating insecurity and distrust.
Sound transitional justice, accountability, vetting and reporting mechanisms had to be put into
place to deter future acts of violence and restore trust. Participants noted that progress in other
areas such as institutional capacity-building and access to technology had to be addressed
concurrently. Panellists also underscored the importance of civil society, media, online social
networks and a two-way dialogue to track progress. The allocation of adequate resources to the
security sector was seen as a crucial determinant of success.

Background
The Special Discussion was the tenth in the series of joint annual events hosted by the United
Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed
Forces (DCAF) on different aspects of security sector governance.