News Item, 17/05/2011, Rabat: Westerwelle Calls for More Engagement With the Arab World

Support for social and economic change through large-scale joint projects

- PDF

Ansprechpartner

-

Christian Hanelt

Germany and the EU should support change in the Arab world through projects that offer the region clear prospects for social and economic change. That was the message delivered at a conference organized by the Bertelsmann Stiftung in Rabat, Morocco. “We expect the European Commission to produce resolute suggestions for an EU Neighbourhood Policy that we can develop further, together with our partners in the Southern Mediterranean region,” said German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, in his remarks opening the conference.

The EU’s Neighbourhood Policy needs to be realigned, he added, so that it can support democratic change in particular. “We Europeans must have the courage to question existing attitudes,” Westerwelle said. “Instead of individual energy projects we need a European-Mediterranean energy community that can take advantage of a common market and set the course for our joint energy future.”

According to experts at the Bertelsmann Stiftung, the reform process in Morocco itself can also serve as a model for peaceful change throughout the Arab world, with successful reforms there sending a clear signal to the region’s remaining authoritarian regimes. In his opening remarks at the conference, Dr. Gunter Thielen, chairman and CEO of the Bertelsmann Stiftung, noted that Morocco stood before the major opportunity of treading its own, peaceful path. “In light of the protests and demonstrations in the country, King Mohammed VI called for wide-ranging reform,” he said. “If this process is carried out in a serious, sustained manner, it can lead the way to a creating a Morocco that is modern, peaceful and free.”

According to Thielen, in order to ensure the reform process in the Arab world remains viable over time, it must improve the economic situation for the majority of the region’s inhabitants, something that the new solar-energy projects being discussed

for North Africa's deserts could help achieve. "Through such projects designed to produce environmentally friendly energy, Europe could become a true partner," he said. "That type of collaboration between Europe and North Africa would not be based on a short-term exploitation of limited resources, but on long-term economic cooperation between the North and South. Europe's industries and societies need a high degree of energy security that impacts the environment as little as possible, which means that Europe requires long-term partnerships when it comes to realizing the desert-based solar-energy projects. For the Mediterranean region and especially for countries such as Morocco, this would provide a basis for developing independent, forward-looking structures that could provide people with a solid economic future."

In his remarks, Westerwelle also emphasized the opportunities that a solar-energy partnership would bring. "The combination of European know-how and Morocco's climate, which is ideal for technology that makes use of renewable energy, would create long-term training and employment opportunities on site," he said. "In the medium term, renewable energy from Morocco could become a key export to Europe, which would provide Morocco's youth with better opportunities. If the pilot projects prove profitable, they would also bring private investors to Morocco. To that extent, an energy partnership with the European Union could also serve as a model for future European-Mediterranean partnerships."

Downloads

- Europe in Dialogue #01/2011 (2.7 MB)
- Kronberg Talks Overview (77 KB)
- Kronberger Gespräche - Hintergrund (88 KB)
- Rede Dr. Guido Westerwelle (54 KB)
- Rede Dr. Gunter Thielen (46 KB)
- Rede Günther Öttinger (44 KB)