

The Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Kronberg Talks in Morocco: An overview

The Bertelsmann Stiftung is Germany's largest politically independent think tank operating under civil law. With its motto "Inspiring People – Shaping the Future," it seeks to ensure greater participation by all people and all nations in a world of increasing globalization.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung was founded by the entrepreneur Reinhard Mohn in 1977. Its nonprofit work is funded predominantly by income earned from its shares in Bertelsmann AG, Europe's largest media conglomerate. To document the use of its resources, Bertelsmann Stiftung publishes an annual report at the end of each fiscal year following an official audit of its operations.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung's areas of activity include European affairs, international understanding, culture, health, business and education. With its offices in Washington and Brussels, the Bertelsmann Stiftung is expanding its international efforts.

As a private operating foundation, the Bertelsmann Stiftung invests its resources solely in projects which it initiates and implements itself. Working together with those affected, it identifies areas in which reform is needed. Our goal is to encourage social change, which requires an ongoing dialogue with all of society's stakeholders. In addition, we constantly strive to earn the trust of those on whose time and creativity we depend for implementing our proposed solutions. We place particular emphasis on maintaining an active exchange with other countries and cultures.

Germany faces major challenges stemming from globalization, demographic change, an increasingly heterogeneous population and the emergence of a knowledge society. It is therefore critically important that we Germans learn from the rest of the world and are open to other countries, cultures and ethnic traditions. These considerations have also motivated the Bertelsmann Stiftung to hold a variety of conferences aimed at promoting international understanding.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung's programme "Europe's Future"

In its Europe's Future programme, the Bertelsmann Stiftung explores ways of making the European Union more citizen-friendly, transparent and efficient. Especially the safety net for the euro following the severe financial and economic global crisis and the implementation of the Lisbon treaty shows that the union of 27 member states is further deepening its relations. Another important question is how to promote cooperative and peaceful relations between the EU and its neighboring regions. Its southern neighbors (North Africa, the Middle East and the Gulf region) play a crucial role in this context. Especially now that we witness dramatic changes in several Arab countries, relations between Europe and North Africa have to be based on new

pillars of partnership. Therefore, the Bertelsmann Stiftung, as a German think tank, wishes to devote its attention to the opportunities and challenges facing our joint future in the Mediterranean.

Since 1995, the Bertelsmann Stiftung has been active in this field with its Kronberg Middle East Talks . This unique forum allows policymakers, diplomats, entrepreneurs, bankers, journalists, representatives of academia and the civil society to discuss strategies for dealing with the challenges of the Middle East and improving the relationship between Europe and its southern neighbors. A discussion paper is drawn up to serve as a basis for these talks; it is made available to the interested public after the meetings. Thanks to their continuity and sustained impact since they were initiated in 1995, the Kronberg Talks have gained recognition throughout Europe as an important forum for these topics and a model for similar efforts.

13th Kronberg Talks in Rabat / Morocco, 17th May 2011

The six Arab countries in North Africa (Mauretania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt) have a lot of resources and face a variety of challenges. Now, people demand more ownership, participation, political co-determination and social welfare. North Africa has much potential to jointly explore common interests and people`s desires. In consequence, the European Union has to change its approach to a NEW North Africa offering a new set of partnership initiatives.

For example: Stronger cooperation in the field of energy/environment and education could support a more humane and just approach to the joint concern of migration and immigration as well as the fight against poverty and unemployment. The strong attention gained by the Desertec Initiative shows that a joint future can be built. Creating sober energy for North Africa and Europe in the Maghreb pushes the development of modern technologies and creates potential jobs for Arab societies. Furthermore, the increasing engagement and investments of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in North Africa support those countries facing social and economic challenges. Finally, civil society is playing an increasing role in shaping the future of North African countries. Civil society organizations have to have a stronger role in setting up a NEW “Union for the Mediterranean”.

Facilitating a discussion about these issues is the goal of the Bertelsmann Stiftung and its Moroccan partner, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, in holding the 13th Kronberg talks as a joint conference in Rabat, 17th May, 2011. The Bertelsmann Stiftung is represented by Dr. Gunter Thielen and Liz Mohn of the Executive Board of Germany`s Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Under the heading “Sustainable Development – A New Dialogue between Europe and North Africa” some 200 parliamentarians, diplomats, entrepreneurs, bankers, experts from the academe and civil society representatives from Europe, Morocco

and the other North African countries will gather Tuesday morning, May 17th in the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Afterwards some 50 of those participants will continue to discuss the issues of social, economic, political and cultural relations across the Mediterranean in further depth around the table. A discussion paper, a summary of which is enclosed, will provide inspiration for the conference participants' deliberations.

Taib Fassi-Fihri (Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco), Dr. Guido Westerwelle (Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany) and Günther Oettinger (EU-Commissioner for Energy) will open the event.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung will report about the discussions and their results on its website. In addition the revised discussion paper will be widely distributed.

For further information please visit our website:

<http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/europa-nahost>

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